

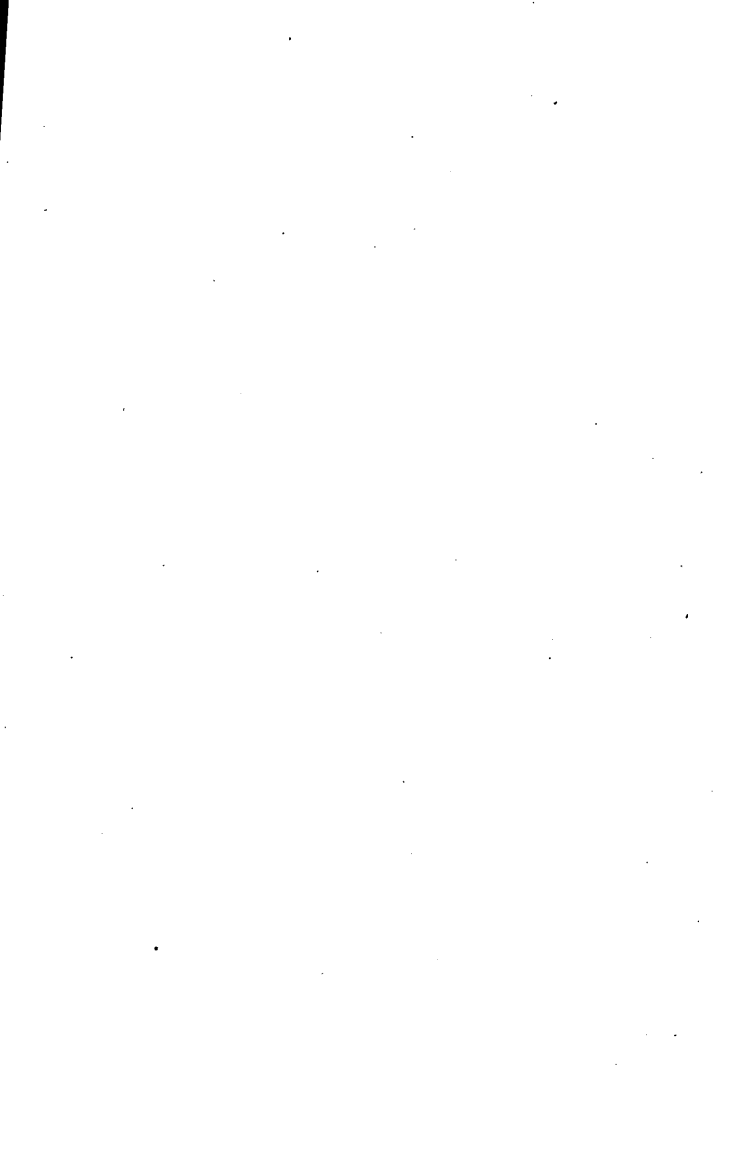
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## Everyday Christian Life



# Everyday Christian Life

OR

SERMONS BY THE WAY

BY

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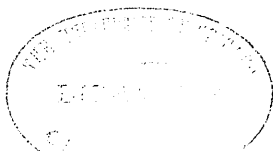
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## PREFACE.

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**I**N the title to this volume of Sermons, I have endeavoured to express the humbleness of their pretensions. They are ordinary parochial exhortations, mainly delivered on Sundays after Trinity, during that great division of the Church's year in which she endeavours to impress on us the reiterated lessons of daily duty—that duty towards God, and duty towards our neighbour, on which hang all the Law and the Prophets.

The work of preaching, which so many despise, is full of anxious responsibility. The anxiety of any sincere and honest man is only to teach the truth so far as God has enabled him to see it. I can imagine no calling more vulgar or

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more miserable than that of the preacher, if he has in view anything but the edification, the moral advance, the religious instruction, the spiritual awakenment of his congregation. And, among many other perils of unfaithfulness, he must be on his guard lest, through carelessness or indolence, he fail "rightly to divide the word of truth."

The elements of our religious belief come to us not from one source but from many. Our religion is Natural—for it is confirmed by, and in part even derived from, that great Book of God which is the nature of created things. It is Historical—for even our shortest creed mentions the name of a Roman Procurator, and refers to facts which took place in the course of historical events. It is Revealed—for its most essential truths were brought to light by the Son of God, and were such as man's unaided intellect would never have discovered. It is Scriptural—for it refers as its ultimate authority to the Word of God, contained in a sacred book.

It is Experiential—for its convictions are brought home to us by the teachings of providential circumstance, which now bright, now sombre, are woven like warp and woof into the web of our little lives. It is altogether Supernatural—for its deepest and holiest intuitions are uttered by the Spirit of God within us ; they are the voiceless whispers heard within the silence and darkness of that Holy of Holies which is the regenerate soul of man. It is the duty of the preacher, so far as lies within his power, to bring out some parts at least of these many-sided revelations ; he must try ever to keep before the minds of his hearers the illustrations, the facts, the messages, the confirmations, the hopes, the gleams of inward light which radiate in constant pulsations from the divine centre of the Christian's life.

But while the Gospel and its lessons may be considered under numberless aspects they may all be summed up under these two heads—lessons of doctrine, and lessons of practice. A

teaching exclusively doctrinal might appeal only to the understanding, and might result in nothing but an intolerant Pharisaism ; a teaching exclusively practical might only resemble a child's flower struck in the sand, which has no root. Doctrine and morality can never be dislinked from each other, for it is their perpetual connexion which constitutes the unity of Scripture. In this matter St. Paul sets us a consummate lesson. Nearly all his Epistles fall into two well-marked divisions, in one of which he lays down the foundations of all Christian truths, while in the other he rears the superstructure of moral exhortation. But we may appeal to a higher authority even than that of the Great Apostle. For the same remark holds true of the teaching of Him who spake as never man spake. What were all His miracles but lessons taught in action ? What were all His parables but eternal precepts springing out of eternal truths ?

The lessons which I have tried to inculcate

in the following sermons are not mainly doctrinal. Yet I do not think that in any one of them, however immediately practical its aim, the great essential doctrines of the Gospel have, even for a moment, been left out of sight.

With these words then I send them forth. No one can feel more deeply than I do their manifold imperfections. But if He deigns to bless them, Who can use the humblest instruments for the furtherance of His kingdom, there may be some readers to whom they will not have been addressed in vain.

FREDERIC W. FARRAR.

WESTMINSTER,

*Oct. 1887.*



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## I.

### Heaven in Earthly Homes:

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

"But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—2 PETER iii. 13.

"**H**OPE," says the poet, "springs eternal in the human breast." We are ever looking forward to a golden time, which like the splendour of the rainbow, flying before us as we advance, leaves us only amid the driving rain. "Man," adds the poet in the next line, "never is, but always to be blest." His happiness is much more often a thing of memory or of hope, than a thing of fruition. In vain he experiences the perpetual disenchantment of new years. In vain he finds

New times, new climes, new lands, new men—but still  
The same old tears, old crimes, and oldest ill.

In the minds of the early Christians there was a strange mixture of feelings as regards the present life. They were looking forward with constant and eager expectation for the coming of the



Lord. The word used to describe this yearning (*ἀποκαταδοκία*) implies the head and neck strained eagerly forward to catch sight of some approaching chariot. Their watchword was Maranatha, "The Lord is at hand." They thought that any morning might witness the flaming advent of their King. They never knew whether the scarlet clouds of sunrise might not herald some world-catastrophe. Misunderstanding some of the reported sayings of Christ, mistaking, like the disciples, sometimes the spiritual for the literal, sometimes the literal for the spiritual, they were tempted into the feverish and impractical restlessness against which St. Paul so earnestly warned his Thessalonian converts. And when the Second Advent on the clouds of heaven was so long delayed, the natural result was first disappointment, and then in some minds unbelief. "Where," they asked, "is the promise of His coming?" And all that the writer of this Epistle can say in answer, is to reassert to them that as certainly as there had once been a deluge of water which drowned the old world, so certainly shall there be a deluge of fire to destroy the world which now is. The earth, he tells them, is "stored with fire." The day shall come when her volcanoes, bursting the seals which repress the impatient earthquake, shall bellow destruction from their fiery cones, and the world, with its elements melted by fer-

vent heat, shall become but a burnt-up cinder like her attendant moon. So too say the other Apostles. "This world," says St. Paul, "passeth away, and the fashion thereof." "I saw," says St. John, "a new heaven, and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away."

And we may still retain that hope of, nay, that sure belief in, a new heaven and a new earth in the eternity which is to be. But now, at the beginning of this new year, the question is, whether it need be *a hope* only? whether even here and now the new heaven may not spread over us its soft empyreal azure, and the new earth may not at least begin to rejoice for us and to blossom as the rose?

Is this possible?

I. My friends, let us have no illusions. Illusions, self-deceiving dreams, beliefs into which we have wilfully persuaded ourselves, can give but a base and pitiable happiness; the happiness of the maniac who takes the twisted straws of his cell for a royal crown. If anything be trustworthy, truth is. Let us above all be true. Let us, before proceeding any farther, look at things as they are. The duty of courage, the duty of sincerity requires us to face realities, not to dwell in an atmosphere of rosy optimism. When we have seen things as they are, we can better judge of things as they might be.

Look first at this material world, "our poor home, our transitory dwelling." It is filled undoubtedly with beauty and goodness. The wonder and the power of the visible things reveal indisputably the Invisible Creator. If we have faith even as a grain of mustard-seed,

The world's no blank for us,  
No blot ; it means intensely, and means good.

I know no surer refutation of atheism, no surer proof that God is, and that God is good, than the fact that He has created in us an instinct for, and a love of beauty, and has also abundantly gratified that instinct in every common sight and sound. "By the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the Maker of them is seen." All common things are lovely so far as man leaves them so ; and in their loveliness we read the very autograph of God. Through every gateway of the senses flow pure and delightful impressions to the healthy soul. There are delicious fruits of autumn, there are fragrant odours of spring. For the ear there is the song of birds, and the murmur of the sea, and the warbling of the vernal breeze, and "angelical soft trembling voices," and silver songs and solemn instruments. And for the eye what wealth and worlds of beauty, "fire, and the swift air, and the circle of the stars, and the violent water, and the lights of heaven,"

We look upwards and there is the overhanging vault fretted with the golden fire of its sunrise and sunset, and silvery clouds, and "the floor of heaven inlaid with patines of bright gold." We look downwards and there is the green grass with its daily miracle of humble flowers. The Alpine summits, the rose upon their flushing snow, the blue distant hills, the yellow wealth of harvest, the trees in their "green plenitude of May," the dewdrop sparkling like a diamond in the bosom of the rose, the gorgeous conflagration of autumn lending beauty even to decay;—the laugh of summer waters, the colourings of the shell upon the shore, the iridescence of the peacock's wing—are not these signs that God is Love? Since the days of Job, mankind has seen that it is only a Father of mercies who could have endowed with all this glory and melody the hearing ear and seeing eye of love. When we think of these things only, we might almost say that a new earth is not to be desired. Alas! the dream is soon broken. We soon recognize that "there is a crack in everything;" that there is not beauty only but fearfulness. ( Year by year there is death on the mountain slopes, and ruthlessness in fire, and shipwreck on the sea. The more terrible aspects of Nature are less common than the lovely ones, but they exist. The storm blackens the sky, and buffets the tormented waves; the great winds of God

howl over devastated lands ; the all-shattering lightning smites like an angel's sword of flame. I need not quote once more the terrible indictment of Nature in the posthumous essays of John Stuart Mill, who describes her as being more cruel and refined in torture than a Nabis or a Domitian. But take the spontaneous testimony of our greatest living writer of prose, and of our poet-laureate in verse. "Besides the fearfulness of immediately dangerous phenomena," says Mr. Ruskin, "there is an occult and subtle horror in many aspects of the creation around us, calculated to fill us with serious thought, even in our times of quietness and peace. . . . Wrath and threatening are invariably mingled with love. . . . The blasted trunk, the barren rock, the moaning of the bleak winds, the roar of the black, perilous, merciless whirlpools of the mountain streams, the continual fading of all beauty into darkness and of all strength into dust—have these no language for us?" And in "The Cup," by Lord Tennyson, after the invocation to the Divinity, "whose breath is balmy wind to robe our hills with grass," you may read the tremendous counter-invocation to the same power.

O Thou that slay'st the babe within the womb  
Or in the being born, or after slayest him  
As boy or man. O Thou whose stormy voice  
Unseckets the great oak, and rears his root

Beyond his head, and strows our fruits, and lays  
Our golden grain, and runs to sea, and makes it  
Foam over all the fleeted wealth of kings  
And peoples ;  
Whose arrow is the plague, whose quick flash splits  
The mid-sea mast, and rifts the tower in the rock,  
And hurls the victor's column down, with him  
That crowns it :  
Who causeth the safe earth to shudder and gape  
And gulf and flatten in her closing chasm  
Doomed cities, hear !  
Whose lava-torrents blast and blacken a province  
To a cinder, hear !  
Whose winter-cataracts find a realm and leave it  
A waste of rock and ruin, hear !

Yes, we look even at inanimate nature, and, in spite of all its glory, we must still sigh for a new heaven and a new earth in which destruction shall not run riot, nor the life of man be the sport of forces which, even if they be in their totality beneficial for the race, are yet for the individual "blind as fate, brutal as tyranny, merciless as death."

II. We turn to the world of man. Here, again, how much is there which is beautiful and full of hope. "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and movement how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!" And yet when we look at man, whether self-revealed in history, or self-portrayed in literature, or visible to us in daily life, while we rejoice in much that is bright and

noble, how clear does it become once more that human nature also has a crack in it. In history, even if we search no farther than the Bible, what a scene is presented to us! The epitaph on the antediluvian world is that "The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And no sooner had the Flood ceased to rebaptize the world than mankind is smitten once more with the curses of drunkenness, and apostasy, and lust. What horrible devil-worship, what merciless ferocity reigned in the old world-empires of Assyria and Babylon, and Egypt! What passions of dishonour cankered the fair civilizations of Greece and Rome! What a deep hypocrisy—bred in the vain idolatry of forms and traditions and the servility of the human intellect—corrupted into complacent Pharisaism the religious professions of the Chosen People! Then Christ came. But even amid the dawning light, what grievous wolves leapt in among the flock of God! Will-worship, the heretical vanity of systems, the pride of priestly rule, the blind falsehoods of tradition, the materializing of sacraments, how soon did they overshadow the Church of Christ!

Then look at all the long centuries of the Middle Ages, with their unnatural self-tortures, their usurping Papacy, their deep-seated cor-

ruption, their horrible enginery of persecution and intolerance. Look at the state of nations even now—these petty wars with poor savages; these distracted confusions of party politics; these race hatreds, so fierce and so blind; this desire to repudiate all national profession of religion; this indifference of the great mass of the laity to the general alienation from God; this eagerness for a purely secular education; this choosing of men without religion for representatives of Christian, or what once were Christian, communities; this worship of material things even in religion; these godless masses; this daily increasing leprosy of depraved, malignant, and vulgar literature; this vast national patronage of the drink, which brings blight and madness and murder into so many thousand homes; this glaring contrast between fierce poverty and the selfish luxury of wealth! Is all this tolerable? Does it in any way represent Christianity? Is it to last for ever? Is there nothing in the world of man, even more than in the world of Nature, to make us yearn for the new heaven and the new earth?

Does not this glance at the world of man almost make us say with Cardinal Newman, "If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into the living, busy world and see no reflexion of its



Creator ;" or confess with the blameless King of the Idyls :

I saw God in the shining of the stars,  
I saw Him in the flowering of the fields,  
But in His ways with man I found Him not !

III. And so again with our little individual lives. The Christian may, like St. Paul, be quite content to stay here as long as God places him here, to serve (if he may haply serve) his brethren ; but are there many Christians who can help feeling that to depart and to be with Christ, to enter that new heaven and that new earth, would be πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον, far, far better ? For life, too, at its best, has a crack in it. Somehow, the trail of the serpent is all over it. The most perfect man is imperfect, the most innocent man has his weak point. The infant Achilles in the Greek legend is dipped in the waters of the Styx, and the touch of the wave makes him invulnerable ; but the water has not touched the heel by which his mother held him, and to that vulnerable heel the deathful arrow finds its way. Siegfried, in the "Nibelungen Lied," bathes in the dragon's blood, and it has made him, too, invulnerable ; but, unknown to him, a lime-tree leaf has fluttered down upon his back, and into the vital spot, where the blood has not touched his skin, the murderer's dagger smites. Everything in the Icelandic Saga has sworn not to injure

Balder, the brightest and most beloved of all the Northern gods, but the insignificant mistletoe has not been asked to take the oath, and by the mistletoe he dies. These are the dim, sad allegories by which the world indicates that even the happiest man cannot be all happy, nor the most invincible altogether safe, nor the best altogether good. Whatever may be the blessings which God has given to us in life—and to the poorest of us He has given, if not more than we desire, far, far more than we deserve—yet is there one among us all who must not yearn for the new heaven and the new earth; for the treasures which neither moth nor rust corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal; for the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?

IV. But now, after this necessary survey, after seeing and admitting that every earthly blessing has a flaw in it, I return to my first question. While we cherish no illusions as to the presence of wickedness and sorrow and peril, we still ask, Is it wholly impossible for us, here and now, to spread over our heads some of the azure of that new heaven, and to make the new earth *begin* at least to blossom as the rose? and I answer, Yes, it is possible; it is in our power, if through the o'er-arching azure we can gaze into clear openings of the empyrean, and there by the eye of faith see Jesus standing at the right

hand of God. I answer, Yes, it is possible to the sincere, the humble, and the faithful; to all who feel and have experienced that love and duty can make a little heaven even on this sad earth.

i. For what is our conception of the new heaven and the new earth which we desire? Is it a mere absence of annoyances? Is it an egotism expanded to infinitude? Is it a sensual Mohammedan Paradise? Is it a selfish Palace of Art? Is it a city paved with gold, or a pagoda of jewels like the New Jerusalem of St. John in its mere external aspect? Childish must we be indeed if we have not got beyond these symbols; if we do not know that man is in his essence a spiritual being, and that for a spiritual being there can be no felicity save in spiritual conditions—in communion with God, in serenity of mind, in purity of heart. We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, *wherein dwelleth righteousness*. Shall we ever enjoy that heaven hereafter? Yea, if we truly seek it now. But “are your minds set upon righteousness, O ye congregation? and do ye judge the thing that is right, O ye sons of men?”

ii. It is not possible for me here, at this time, to show more fully how, if righteousness be the one characteristic of the new heavens and the new earth, it is possible for us, in this new year,

to further the reign of righteousness, and so to foretaste the heaven which is so near us all, if we would but enter it. But it is perhaps possible for me, in conclusion, to give one illustration, to show to how large an extent the happiness of heaven is in our own power even upon a sad and guilty earth, because that earth has been redeemed by Christ. Let this my one illustration of the truth be taken from the one fairest and sweetest sphere of all life—our homes.

If there can be any place upon earth supremely blessed, it is, it ought to be, an English *home* home. If there be one field of asphodel on this side of the grave, if there be any place over which God's angels of peace may rest for a moment on their messages of mercy and wave their purple wings, it must surely be in Christian homes ; in homes around which cluster the sweet memories of childhood, trained in love and duty ; "where youth shines like a star ;" where there may always be an ark of refuge and a haven of rest amid the storm of troubles and injustice ; where so many voices speak to the ear in music, and the quiet peacefulness of old age is almost as beautiful as the glad enthusiasm of younger days.

Now here is the point which I want to illustrate : our homes exactly resemble our lives in this, that they are indeed liable to troubles and calamities which are wholly beyond our power,

and yet that if righteousness dwell therein, if they be enriched with the beauty of holiness, if Christ be there a never-exiled guest, they will, in their measure, partake, here and now, of the blessedness of the new heaven and the new earth. Alas! we admit that, as in the world, so even in our most cherished homes, there must be a flaw in the jewel of any earthly happiness. Even in Paradise there was the snake. Do what we will we cannot shut out care, or sorrow, or misfortune, or even calamity. Even in an English home there may be a prodigal; a warped slip of wilderness even among the trees of God. And care may enter, and bitter poverty. Nor from any home, as this dark shadow shows, can we keep out the step of death. The dart of the last enemy can pierce even through the holy atmosphere of love, and sooner or later in the desolate house, which was once so happy, must flow the tears of the widow and the fatherless.

For every one of us, as well as for those who mourn in this church to-day, is waiting that Shadow with the keys. We all, in turn, must face our forlorn hours of bereavement. For us, too, sooner or later, our house must be left unto us desolate. How, then, in such a world as this, can we do otherwise than yearn for that new heaven and new earth, where God shall wipe all tears from off all faces, and whence sorrow and sighing shall flee away? But mark, my friends

the lesson. These natural sorrows are, and are meant to be, full of blessedness; the light of God shining upon them, transmutes them into heavenly gold. The wounds which God makes, God heals. The fire which kindles the grains of frankincense upon His altar, at the same time brings out their fragrantcy. All that He sends, if borne submissively, becomes rich in mercy. Upon the troubled soul which seeks Him His consolations increase "with the gentleness of a sea which caresses the shore it covers." Even in the hour when we have committed our beloved to the dust—

Through thick pangs, high agonies,  
Faith unto life breaks, and death dies.

A brittle thing is our earthly happiness—brittle as some thin vase of Venetian glass; and yet neither anxiety nor sorrow, nor the dart of death, which is mightier than the oak-cleaving thunderbolt, can shatter a thing even so brittle as the earthly happiness of our poor little homes, if we place that happiness under the care of God. But though neither anguish nor death can break it with all their violence, *sin* can break it at a touch; and selfishness can shatter it, just as there are acids which will shiver the Venetian glass. Sin and selfishness—God's balm does not heal in this world the ravages which they cause! Drink, unbridled passions, absorbing egotism, headstrong indifference: these are fatal

✓ to the happiness of any home. But these can be avoided. The misery which these induce is a self-chosen misery. Where these are, there indeed the wedded calm of homes is disastrously ruined. Self-assertion, self-will, selfishness, the inability to bear and forbear, the refusal to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ, the absence of healing, holy, self-abnegating tenderness—these are indeed the beginning of troubles. Too many know it by bitter experience. They see the fires of hell redden upon their hearth, and coldness succeed to love, and cruelty to coldness; and if drink comes in, as it often does, in such cases, brutalism succeeds to cruelty. But even short of these immeasurable calamities—

Alas ! how light a cause may move  
Dissension between hearts that love !  
Hearts that the world in vain had tried  
And sorrow but more closely tied ;  
That stood the storm when waves were rough,  
Yet, in a sunny hour, fall off,  
Like ships that have gone down at sea  
When heaven was all tranquillity.

“Better,” says Solomon, “is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.”

What then, in brief, is the one best, surest secret of a happy home? It is that it should be a home wherein dwelleth righteousness, wherein dwelleth the fear of God, wherein dwelleth love.

And since this is in our power, therefore the *blessedness* which is deeper and more enduring than happiness is also within our own reach. And so it is with the world. If we make of this world, so far as we are concerned, a world wherein dwelleth righteousness, so far do we anticipate the fruition of the new world, the new Jerusalem. Let us aim at this tranquil, this sober happiness of quiet and confidence and peace in God. This is no chimæra. The possibility of winning this is no illusion. In our patience let us possess, let us acquire our souls. The world will still be the world. There will still be the pestilence which walketh in darkness and the arrow that flieth in the noon-day. The animalism of brutal passions will still crowd our streets with the infamy of its victims and the wretchedness which dogs their heels. There will still be envy and hatred and malice, and lies, and sickness, and poverty, and death; but the world in which our inmost souls shall live and move and have their being will even in this life become an anticipated fruition of the new heaven and the new earth. The outer world may still continue for many a long year, it may be for many a long century, to grope in Egyptian darkness, in darkness which may be felt; but our souls, like the children of Israel in Goshen, may have light in their dwellings. For God is light, and he who dwelleth in



God dwelleth in light ; and where God's light is there is wisdom and safety, and a peace which the world does not even attempt to give ; and which, happily, neither its malice, nor its wickedness, nor its misfortunes can ever take away.

## II.

### How to make Earth like Heaven.

“Wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—2 PETER iii. 13.



LAST Sunday we began the New Year by considering our hopes of the New Heaven and the New Earth, and by asking ourselves the question whether, even here and now, we might not enjoy at least a foretaste of the fruition of that realm of God. We did not hide from ourselves that everything earthly is transitory and imperfect; that alike the material world, and the whole estate of man, and our individual lives, groan and travail in pain together even until now, awaiting the redemption of the body. But we inquired whether we may not hasten the blessed restitution of all things to their ideal beauty and happiness, even as in the previous verse St. Peter speaks of Christians as expecting and hastening the Advent—the Day of the Lord. And we took from the sphere of home life one single illustration of the certainty that we can

ourselves make unspeakable differences in the blessedness or misery of the conditions which surround us. It has been said of marriage by a wise writer that

It locally contains or hell or heaven,  
There is no third place in it.

Since an English home may be to us, as we make it, a heaven or a hell, clearly no small part of life depends upon our own choice of good or evil; and if, in a sphere so wide, we can in a measure anticipate, even here and even now, the new heavens and the new earth, there is reason to believe that we could do so in still larger measure—that we could thus, as it were, antedate the coming of Christ's kingdom, and lead on the lingering years.

There are two great spheres of public activity, politics and business; and for each of us privately there is the domestic, the social, the individual life. Let me try to show this evening, how, not in our homes only, but through all our lives, living as children of the kingdom, we may anticipate something of its final blessedness. I shall not attempt to exhaust the subject, but only to illustrate it. Yet if you will grasp the general thought with all the vast responsibility which pertains to it—if you will regard the elements of the highest blessedness to which man's spirit can reach as things not

distant, not Utopian, but perfectly attainable—you will soon see that God has not mocked us with a dream, or dazzled us with a mirage of the wilderness, but that He places within our reach the happiness which is our being's end and aim, that He has told us the secret which unlocks the eternal treasure-house of spiritual peace.

2. "We, brethren, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." You see St. Peter's conception of the new universe. Its one characteristic to him is righteousness. Is righteousness attainable by man? If it be, then the essence of God's kingdom is not beyond man's reach. If righteousness be attainable here and now, then here and now we may at least *enter* into the kingdom of heaven. Is our conception of happiness identified with righteousness? Is that the thing which we desire? Is that our ideal? Is that the one goal to which we are stretching forward in the heavenly race? If so, then for us, even here and now, "the path to heaven lies through heaven, and all the way to heaven is heaven." What sort of a condition answers to the heaven of which you dream, for which you sigh? Is it a state of things which you vaguely call glory? Is it a starry crown—the symbol of supreme self-aggrandisement? Is it a golden throne, the summit of individual

exaltation? Is it the rest of an untroubled indolence? If so our heaven may prove to be indeed a chimæra both now and hereafter. Such notions of heaven betray the unsuspected fact that, after all, our high spiritual hopes resolve themselves into mere earthliness—into an ill-concealed amalgam of vanity and selfishness.

The true conception of heaven is holiness. It is the elimination of baseness and of sin. So says David. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall rise up in His Holy Place? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart, and that hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek Him, even of them that seek thy face, O Jacob."

So, too, says St. Paul. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of"—the crown of what? Nine persons out of ten will fill up the word with "glory"—"the crown of glory;" but that is not what St. Paul says: what he says is "henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved His appear-

ing." A crown of righteousness! Well, but that is a crown which many of God's children have worn visibly here on earth. Ah! how childish beside that unseen crown is the round and top of sovereignty which glitters on so many an uneasy brow! Glory! The world gives the name of glory to mere tedious pomp. It sees no kingliness in the persecuted misery of godlike souls. "Art Thou a king, then?" asks the cowardly, blood-stained Roman Procurator, in undisguised astonishment, with unconcealed contempt, of the poor Prisoner who stood before him—"art Thou a king, Thou poor, worn, tear-stained outcast, forsaken of every friend, of every subject, in thine hour of bitter need?"

"Thou sayest"—such was the calm answer—"thou sayest that I am a king." Ay! but the crown is not a crown of pride; the kingdom is not of this world. And so have all God's saints felt. Do you look upon heaven as a reward, or a personal honour? An unlimited treasury, or a sort of glorified star and ribbon? It is nothing so trumpery, or so commercial; and if it were it is not our poor shivering virtues that would deserve it. It is not a reward; it is the gift of God. Do you want "to go to heaven?" as they phrase it. Well, you may go to heaven now if you really desire it, and if you know what heaven means. "Go to heaven!" My friends, heaven is a temper, not a place. What

do you pray for, when you pray for heaven? What was the reward for which the saints have looked? A white robe? a golden harp? a house of gems? to be praised by all men? to be avenged on their enemies? No; but when the vision said to St. Thomas Aquinas, "Thou hast written well of me, O Thomas; what reward dost thou desire?" *Non aliam, nisi te, Domine*—"No other reward than Thyself, O Lord!" was the meek and rapt reply. Did not David say the same? "Thou, O God, art the thing that I long for." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee?" Are our souls thus athirst for God? Amid the eager competition of business, amid the mad desire for pleasure and for gold, how many of you are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Ah! my friends, if God and His righteousness be our conception of heaven, we may attain thereto—ay, without money, without price.

If righteousness be the one characteristic of the new heaven and the new earth, it is here within reach. If God be the one object of our desire, and oneness with Christ our single aim, why may not the best of heaven lie about us now? "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God!" Which of us can honestly say that? If we can, happy are we. "Blessed are they

that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Modern science has shown us why the deep sky is blue ; and here in a London lecture-room you may see the azure of the firmament enclosed for you in a tube of common glass. Oh, my friends, would that we could see how possible it is for us to make our lives like that tube of glass, and to fill them with the spiritual azure of the new heaven ! And if each of our lives were full of heaven, how widely would it diffuse its lovely radiance, how soon would that new heaven glow over all the darkened world !

3. But I can only give you some passing illustrations of this possibility, taken from various spheres or elements of our private and public life.

i. Millions of men are engaged in one form or other of trade and commerce, and every one of us is more or less occupied in affairs with which money is concerned. Now one main element of righteousness is stainless honesty, inflexible integrity. Have you ever thought how immense an amelioration would be introduced into the conditions of life if perfect integrity, if stainless honesty were, as it might be, the invariable rule ? How keenly does the Book of Proverbs express the world's experience of the commonness of cheating, and quackery, and selfish struggling competition, and the incessant aim



to over-reach and to defraud, to make unjust gains, to win all we legally or illegally can, not the fair and honest profit and proportion! But the Christian must ever pray, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on Thee."

Eliminate from all money concerns the elements of fraud and immoral custom, of scramble and selfishness, of puff and push, of the dishonesty which postpones or will not pay just debts, of the counter-dishonesty which wrings from the fair payments of the honest the bad debts of the dishonest: eliminate the robbing of the hireling of his wages, and the grinding the faces of the poor, and the making gain of the appetites, or the wants, or the miseries, or of the guileless inexperience of others; eliminate the fraudulent dealing with trusts, the playing tricks with money, the forgeries, the bubble companies, the gambling speculations, the rings of middlemen, the cooking of accounts, the tamperings with markets—get rid of all this network of the base and evil spirit of Mammon, this manifold enginery of temptation which Satan puts into the hands of those who, making haste to be rich, shall not be innocent—and can you estimate the greater heavenliness which would then be introduced into human society? Truly the love of money is a root of all evil; only the fewest know how to win it wisely, to spend it nobly. Men try in vain to serve God

and Mammon. "They do not disbelieve in Christ, but, like Judas, they sell Him." They palter with God for gold. If we would pour but one ray of heaven into the shut house of life, the first essential for each and for all of us is absolute, perfect, inflexible integrity. "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord.

ii. Nor less essential to our new earth here is perfect Purity. Can you—can any mind short of the Infinite—at all measure the depth and the width of shame and misery with which life is flooded by the violation of God's law of chastity? Who shall tell how many millions are the lives in which, because of uncleanness, their root has been as rottenness and their blossom has gone up as dust? He who sins against this high inexorable eternal law does so verily with his eyes open—he goes like a bird to the snare of the fowler, like an ox to the slaughter, like a fool to the correction of the stocks—he goes knowingly to the banquet where the dead are, and the guests in the depths of hell. Immeasurable is the curse which impurity introduces into human life; immeasurable the wrongs which it inflicts upon the innocent; immeasurable the certain and awful retribution which it drags down upon the guilty. Alas! we need go no farther than the shameful streets and agonizing hospitals of great cities to know the horrors of disease and

wretchedness which follow in the wake of God's insulted and violated laws! And yet they do not reveal one thousandth part of the desperate evil. Let us not speak of it: but look and pass. But to every young person here present most earnestly would I say, Beseech Almighty God that He may teach you how benevolent and how inexorable is the law of purity. Cherish the unsullied crystal of that heavenly innocence. When the serpent creeps in, the bliss of God's Paradise is gone. You can never know what heaven is—you can never know the serenity of perfect peace—until you keep your mortal bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity. Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in you—except—(oh! what a fearful “except”!)—except ye be reprobates? “Blessed”—our Saviour's own lips said it—“blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

iii. Once more—(for, as I said, I desire only to illustrate the subject, not to exhaust it)—with perfect integrity, and perfect purity, there must also be perfect love in the new heaven and that tender charitable truthfulness which is a part of it. We need a new heaven and a new earth, most of all, because so many men by hatred and by untruthfulness, as well as by dishonesty and uncleanness, turn earth from a possible heaven into an anticipated hell. Of all piti-

able lives the most pitiable is that of those who make money by pandering to the envy and malice, which are the most snake-like of human infirmities. I know that the world—alike the fashionable world and the vulgar world—does not think so. Alike in the back street and the luxurious drawing-room, men think that scandal is amusing, and take lies for wit. Other vices ally men to brutes, but of malevolent falsehood man has the sad and degrading monopoly. It is, I say again, impossible to estimate the extent to which bad men, and bad women, for their own interests, add to the misery of life, when their throat is an open sepulchre and “the poison of asps is under their lips.” Enough of this also. Earth would be a comparative Paradise if men loved each other, as now they envy, hate, and belie each other, till even the sphere of religion rings with the bitterness of unscrupulous and intriguing faction. “She thought to herself,” writes a modern novelist, “how delightful it would be to live in a house where everybody understood, and loved, and thought about every one else. She did not know that her wish was just for the kingdom of Heaven.”

Now I appeal to every one among you to tell me whether you do not clearly see that life would be utterly different if men would make it different; unutterably more blessed if men

sought or cared for the elements of blessedness. Oh! that men would but be true men, and that women would be the holy and gracious things which God meant women to be; for when they indulge themselves in these sins they cease to be true men or true women. The man whose heart is ever burning with envy, and hatred, and sullen jealousy, and mad ferocity—is he a man, or a jackal, or a tiger? The man who has enslaved himself to lust and drunkenness; the man who, smitten with the wand of the foul enchantress, rolls with pleasure in a sensual sty—is he still a man, or has he become akin to the ape or the swine? The man who is given over to lies and malignities, has he not sunk into a serpent, as he hears the serpent's curse? Expel from the human heart the ape's vileness, the serpent's hiss, the tiger's fury, the vulture wings which hasten to carrion; and then indeed man will become but little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour! Man may be like the brutes or like the angels, as he will. A society of men as God meant them to be, a true Church of Christ—ah! it would be a place which angels themselves might love. And we might help, each one of us, to make earth so. And the more heartily we do this, each for ourselves, the more surely will others do it, for "it is astonishing how much good goodness makes."

4. And, in conclusion, be it small or be it

great, a Church, an ideal Church, a Church of Christ, there shall be, and a Church of Christ there is; and therefore, even here and now, we may behold, we may belong to, the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let us not be impatient about it; let us not despair. If we do we shall not understand the true spirit of the saints of God. They ever felt, even in the worst of times, that "God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all ages." Days of darkness they have known, days of vexation, days in which God seemed to be almost terribly silent, and yet they have been "pressed on every side, but not straitened; perplexed, yet not to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed!" When the wild beast from the sea was wallowing in the blood of the martyrs; when the fires of hell lit the darkness of those gardens on the Pincian Hill; when a Decius or a Diocletian was Emperor; when a Mary or a Philip, a Bonner or an Alva tortured or slew the saints of God; when the feeble spark of heaven's light seemed certain to be quenched under the raging and swelling tempests of the world's persecuting hatred, they have still not feared for Zion; they have still said, "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be moved, God shall help her and that right early." However dark the horizon, whether of the State,

or of the Church, or of our individual lives; however ominous the clouds that may seem to loom upon our future, that horizon is not half so black, those clouds are not half so lurid, as in the days of Claudius and Nero; and yet even in those days, when Jews loathed the Gospel and Gentiles were striving to stamp it under their feet, when intellect spat upon it and philosophy spurned it, and armies smote it and malignity insulted it with shameful lies; even in those days the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews fearlessly spoke of it to poor slaves and artisans as a kingdom that could not be moved. Upon its present certainty he founded its future permanence; and that his brethren might feel its blessedness now, and enter on its future heritage together, he adds the exhortation which I would fain leave with you: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us"—let *us*, at any rate, no matter how much evil is around us, no matter how vehemently the world still goes on its own evil way, with its companions the flesh and the devil; no matter how much the nominal Church is tainted by the faction, the materialism, and the base methods of the world—"let us have grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Let us do this, and we shall have begun already to enter into that new heaven and that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Addison tells us how he once talked with a Rosicrucian about the great secret. "He talked of it as a spirit that lived in an emerald, and converted everything that was near it to the highest perfection it was capable of. 'It gives a lustre,' said he, 'to the sun and water to the diamond. It irradiates every metal, and enriches lead with all the properties of gold. It heightens smoke into flame, flame into light, and light into glory.' He further added that a single ray dissipates care, and pain, and melancholy from the person on whom it falls. 'In short,' said he, 'its presence naturally changes every place into a kind of heaven.' At length I found," says Addison, "that his great secret was nothing else but content."—But to make a heaven requires something more than content; it requires righteousness—new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.



### III.

#### What to Think About.

“ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”—PHILIPPIANS iv. 8.



T. PAUL seems as if he could not break off his glad, humble, grateful letter to the beloved Philippians, whose generosity to him while he was a prisoner had touched his lonely heart. Several times he seems to be on the point of ending it, but cannot resist the desire to give one more solemn and hopeful message. He has already told them to rejoice in the Lord ; to let their gentleness be known unto all men ; to lay aside all nervous anxiety about their future, secure in faith and prayer ; and so, he says, the peace of God, better than any device of man, shall stand sentry over their hearts. Then follows this verse. He tells them what to think of, what to value and make of great account, what

to practise in their lives. And if they do this he says that the God of Peace will certainly be with them.

2. The things which he suggests to their meditation and practice fall into three groups. He bids them think of things which, absolutely, are things real, and things awful; to think of whatsoever things, relatively to man, are just; and of whatsoever things are, relatively to themselves, chaste and pure. Then he sums up all these things with reference to the moral appreciation of them, as being lovely and of good report; as making up the sum total of virtue, as being the sole things worthy of praise. These things, he tells them, should be their absorbing meditation—their lifelong care. Let us look at them a little more closely, if so be that we may find grace to obey these golden counsels of the great apostle to us Gentiles.

3. "Whatsoever things are *true*." The word has a fuller and deeper meaning in the Bible than now it has. Truth with us means the opposite of falsity *in speech*, but in Scripture it means the opposite of *all* unreality, all sham, all semblance. St. Paul bids them to think habitually of all that is *real*; on the substance, not on the shadow; on the eternal, not on the transitory; on God, not on the world. He means the same as David meant when he prayed, "Turn

away mine eyes from beholding vanity,"—*i.e.*, from dwelling on what is hollow and empty—"but quicken Thou me in Thy law." He means the same as our Lord meant when He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." In this, as in all else that is valuable, the sacred authority of Revelation does but emphasize the universal experience of the world. The vanity of human wishes, wishes that disappoint equally in their frustration and in their accomplishment, wishes which are almost more bitter in their fulfilment than in their unsuccess, is a lesson common alike to Solomon the disenchanted king, and to Juvenal the heathen satirist; it is the lesson alike of Paul the Apostle, and of Horace the Epicurean. What is the world, and what the things of the world? Scripture and experience teach us that they are like a mirage in the wilderness—bright, enchanting, full of promise, ending only in scorching drought and glaring sand. In the famous vision of Mirza our moralist describes mankind chasing bubbles on a bridge of three score and ten arches, which spans the rolling waters of a prodigious tide, and sinking through hidden trapdoors into the abyss in the midst of their vain chase. Shakspeare speaks of the soldier

Seeking the bubble Reputation  
E'en in the cannon's mouth.

Our Poet Laureate makes his weary queen  
exclaim,

Oh, bubble world,  
Whose colours in a moment break and fly.

What is a bubble? It is a thin globe of water enclosing air, with which children play. It glitters in the air like a ball of opal and emerald; but leave it alone, and in a few seconds the black spot will show itself amid the colours of the prism, and nothing is left of the radiant phantom but a pellicle of impure water. Man himself, apart from God, is but such a bubble. "To appear, to gleam, to disappear—to be born, to suffer, to die; there is the *résumé* of our ephemeral lives.' In youth, they "shine like a bubble, or the colours on a dove's neck, or the hues of the rainbow, whose very image is fantastical;" in a few seconds appear the dark spaces of manhood's trouble, of care, of sickness, and of age; and then—ashes to ashes, dust to dust! And as is man, so, still more, are the things which man pursues. They look beautiful when they float above our reach; but touch them, and they burst.

This world is all a fleeting show,  
For man's illusion given;  
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,  
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow;  
There's nothing true but heaven.

And false the light on glory's plume,  
As fading hues of even,  
And honour's wreath, and beauty's bloom,  
Are garlands given to the tomb,—  
There's nothing true but heaven.

So sings the light gay poet ; so also says St. Paul  
"The fashion of this world passeth away."

Well then, if you would not be utterly disappointed—utterly and inevitably, and most miserably—"Whatsoever things are *real*"—God, the Soul, Eternity, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—"think on these things."

4. And "whatsoever things are honourable." The word *σεμνὰ* means "noble," "grave," "reverend," "seemly." It is an exhortation to dignity of thought as opposite to meanness of thought. It invites to the gravity of self-respect. Most of the many base things which men say are said anonymously, or on false pretexts, with the pretence of aims more reputable than those by which they are really influenced. Men and women often deceive even themselves. They act and speak and write ignobly, and persuade themselves that they are actuated by sincere and lofty motives. A high sense of our dignity as redeemed ennobled beings would render impossible nine-tenths of the small, mean, envious baseness of which the whole world is full. Almost every vice and sin is, of its very nature, not only sinful, but also unseemly and degrading.

It is the tendency of all sin to drag us down, to make us often the more contemptible the more proud we are. "Sin is the greatest and highest infelicity of any being. It depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauty, extinguishes its light, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquillity, violates its harmony, destroys its life."

When a man fills all his thoughts, and therefore all his life, with wicked aims and forbidden desires he ignores the essential and transcendent dignity of his immortal nature—the dignity of God's image upon him, the sign of his redemption, which was marked in baptism upon his forehead. Oh! let us strive to cherish more and more in our hearts, ere it be too late, that honest and haughty self-respect which shrinks from every baseness as from a stain—that nice and delicate fastidiousness of honour for ourselves which cannot plunge itself into what is mean and vile.

"No one will ever know it;" so argues the subtle tempter. But the answer is, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Though none ever know it, *I* shall know it—God will know it; it will lie for ever like a spark of fire upon my agonising conscience; the sense of it will humiliate me; the guilt of it will drag down my life. Nothing becomes too bad for human beings, young or old, who have once lost utterly their self-

respect. From that moment they fall headlong from their true estate, and they are miserably conscious of it. Why is this sea of life strewn with hopeless wrecks? Why are these crowded cities so full of ghosts? Could that wretched man hang about the public-houses and the corners of the streets; could he sink so low as to live on the grinding toil of his wife, and to squander on his blighting crave for drink the money which should go to feed and clothe the dirty, ragged, depraved children, whom he is training up to be as great a curse to the world as himself? could he have sunk to this loathly worthlessness of degradation if he ever thought of whatsoever things are honourable?

Could that dragged, miserable, unwomanly woman live in the horror of drink and vileness if the dignity of pure womanhood had not been eaten away out of her heart?

Could that foolish youth run greedily with open eyes into disease, and shame, and death—selfish, blasphemous, improvident—if he had ever kept in his soul the truth that man was made to glorify God here, and live with Him for ever in heaven hereafter? Under the pure and infinite majesty of the midnight with all its stars you may see scenes of infamy; you may hear words of leprous defilement, or see two women reel out of the gin-shop to tear each other to pieces in the street, till it seems mar-

vellous that the insulted heavens do not darken themselves with wrath, or gleam into avenging flame, to overwhelm in deserved destruction the human beings who have sunk themselves so unutterably low. Ah! may God preserve every soul of every man and woman and boy here present from such a hell! I know no advice more deep-reaching to young men than this: Respect yourselves; honour and realize your immortal nature. Whatsoever things are seemly, majestic, dignified, awful — God, judgment, eternity—whatever elevates and ennobles you, and delivers you from the coarse seductions of present temptation—think on these things.

5. And “whatsoever things are *just*.” Justice is one of the most elementary of human duties; ay, and one of the rarest. Men’s thoughts are commonly swayed by their interests, tainted by their prejudices; they judge by appearances; they judge unrighteous judgment; they are warped by unreasonable antipathies; they use false balances and unjust weights in judging of one another. I know few just men. One of the very purest and noblest characters in Greek history was known as “Aristides the Just.” Not long ago there died a clergyman who had won among his schoolfellows at Winchester the honourable nickname of “Aristides the Just.” He had borne that name for life. He had never sullied it. He carried it with him to the grave.



When a friend was asked to write his epitaph his answer was, "Carve him a monument with three words on it, 'Aristides the Just,' and leave him to sleep in Jesus." Try to imitate him. Try to be what so very few are, habitually fair—"Whatsoever things are just, think on these things."

6. And "whatsoever things are *pure*." Ah! that this warning might reach the heart of every one of you, and inspire you with the resolute effort to banish from your minds everything that defileth. 'As on the one hand there is nothing in this world more exquisite than a soul from which the bloom and dew of innocence have not been swept away; as there is nothing more divine on earth than the indignant blush of modesty on the pure young cheek; so there is nothing more wretched than he whose soul is a desecrated temple abounding in chambers of unclean imagery, haunted by the spirits of impure and polluted thoughts. Alas! this unsullied loveliness of soul is only possible to those who guard it like the golden apples of the Hesperides. It is gone for those who dwell upon unhallowed thoughts; who long for the poisonous fruit of the tree of the knowledge of evil; who indulge in a base and morbid curiosity; who have once given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness. Remember that thoughts are under our own control; that it

is our own fault if we indulge in them ; that the thought of wickedness is sin ; that God sees and knows our most secret thoughts ; that impure thoughts voluntarily encouraged lead inevitably to fatal deeds and blighted lives. There is no more sure way to blast, as with the poisonous breath of a sirocco, every green leaf and fair flower of youth than to subject it to the hot breath of lewd imaginations. I can imagine no worse misfortune that could happen to any youth than wilful and guilty indulgence in the pollution of debased and debasing thoughts. He can eject, he can suppress, he can refuse them a lodgment if he will ; and if he does not—oh, youth, thou art indeed unhappy !

7. And “whatsoever things are *lovely*”—winning attractive thoughts that live and are radiant in the light. If you think of *such* things, the baser and viler things will have no charm for you. Try, then, above all, “the expulsive power of good affections.” Empty by filling ; empty of what is mean and impure by filling with what is noble and lovely. When the Argonauts sailed past the treacherous rocks of the Sirens they sailed in perfect safety, because Orpheus was one of them, and the song of Orpheus was sweeter, more delightful, more full of noble witchery than the Sirens’ vile, voluptuous strains. Let your souls be filled with the music of Him whom the early Christians

delighted to represent as Orpheus charming the wild beasts of bad passions by his harp.

Your souls are a picture-gallery. Cover the walls of them with things serene, noble, beautiful, and the foul and fleshly will only seem revolting. "Hang this upon the wall of your room," said a wise picture-dealer to an Oxford undergraduate as he handed to him the engraving of a Madonna of Raphael, "and then all the pictures of jockeys and ballet-girls will disappear." Try the same experiment within your souls. Let their walls be hung with all things sweet and perfect—the thought of God, the image of Christ, the lives of God's saints, the aspirations of good and great men, the memories of golden deeds, noble passages of poetic thought, scenes of mountain, and sunset, and ocean. Oh, do this, and there shall be no room for the thoughts of carnal ugliness, which deprave corrupted souls!

8. And "whatsoever things are *of good report.*" Here is the difference between the children of the world and the children of the kingdom. The world delights in whatsoever things are of ill report—base stories, vile innuendoes, evil surmises, scandalous hints. The world revels in envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. It finds nothing piquant for its base and jaded appetite in the beauty of fair deeds and noble purposes; but tricks, and inge-

nious lies, and backbiting, and stabbing reputations in the dark—these the world and the flesh and the devil find amusing; these things flatter their innate ignobleness; on these things they gloat and feed. Do not you be content to degrade yourselves into “sponges saturated from the stagnant goosepond of city gossip.” You, if you would be noble, if you would be a Christian at all, have nothing to do with these things. “Hear as little as you possibly can to the prejudice of others; believe nothing of the kind unless you are forced to believe it; never circulate, nor approve of those who circulate, loose reports; moderate as far as you can the censure of others; always believe that if the other side were heard a very different account would be given of the matter”—that is thoroughly good advice. Above all remember thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Whatsoever things are of good report, think of *these* things.

9. So, then, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. The form of expression does not imply the least doubt that there *is* virtue, and that there *is* praise, but it means “whatever virtue, whatever praise there be.” It involves an appeal even to pagan morals and sensibilities. Virtue is not a Christian word; it occurs scarcely once in the Bible. Why? Because it is a word which belongs rather to heathen ethics than to the Gospel,

rather to Plato and Aristotle than to St. Paul. Not that it is not beautiful, more beautiful (as Aristotle says) than even the morning or the evening star. But in Christianity it is superseded by something deeper, purer, brighter, higher. The morning and the evening star vanish into a sea of lustre when the sun has risen ; and virtue is nothing in comparison with holiness. Yet even ordinary heathen virtue meets with its own praise ; and even virtue and human praise bid us think of whatsoever things are real, seemly, just, pure, winning, of good report. How much more then does the loftier standard of God's praise, and of holiness, make this demand upon us ! Think, then, oh, young men and young women, above all think on, take account of these things ! For these things, St. Paul tells you, are the secret of the peace of God. Thought passes into action. The thought becomes the word, the word the deed, the deed the habit, the habit the character, the character the eternal being of our souls. "The evening air clad in the beauty of a thousand stars" is not lovelier than the character of him whose whole being is passed in the region of eternal realities ; who knows the awful reverence which is due from every man to his own soul ; who loveth the thing that is just, and doeth the thing that is lawful and right in singleness of heart ; who keeps the temple of his soul pure and bright with the

Presence of the Holy One; who loves all that is beautiful whether in Nature or in Art; who hates whatever is ignoble and loves his neighbour as himself. What has such a man to fear? The eternal forces are with him. His heart, his hope, his treasure are beyond the grave, and ever and anon in moments of permitted rapture, he sees the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

## IV.

### Children, and the Child Christ.

*Preached in Westminster Abbey, Innocents' Day. 1886.*

“And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom :  
and the grace of God was upon him.”—LUKE ii. 40.



MY short sermon this afternoon, my children, will be addressed to you alone. I shall think of you, and not of all the other persons who are here present. A good bishop, who now for many years has gone to his rest, told me that once, after he had been preaching in a London church, he saw a little boy standing by one of the pews with red and swollen face, crying as if his heart would break. The kind wife of the bishop stopped and said to the child, “What is the matter with you, my little fellow ?” And he, pointing to the bishop, said, “The man spoke to me ; the man spoke to me.” The preacher had not been thinking of children at all ; but something in the sermon had touched the little boy’s heart, had sped like an arrow to its mark in his conscience. Now it

will be very far from my object to trouble the heart of any one of you to-day ; but when you go away I should like you to think, each one of you, that " the man spoke to me."

1. It was only on Saturday that we kept the joyous festival of Christmas, and yet the three days since then have been days sacred to martyrs—that is, to those who for Christ's sake were cruelly slain ;—first, the young man, St. Stephen, then the old man, St. John, and to-day the little innocent children whom Herod murdered when he wished to slay the child Jesus. And the reason for this is to teach us that while Christ came to make us happy, yet we must not therefore think that we shall escape trouble. It is to teach us that all Christians—young men, and old men, and even little children—must learn to deny themselves for Jesus' sake. Those little innocents at Bethlehem are not the only children who have perished even in childhood. In cruel wars, in the sieges of cities, in famines and plagues and shipwrecks, many and many a little child has perished ; and sometimes when men hated and burnt each other for religious opinions, even little children have had to die for Christ's sake—martyrs, like those holy innocents, in deed though not in will. And though none of you will ever be called to die in your childhood for Jesus' sake, yet God, in His unseen providence, may send you pain, or sickness, or



accident, or even death ; or you may have to weep for the loss of the father or mother who loved you so tenderly ; or He may cause you to suffer, as thousands of poor little children have to suffer, from poverty or hunger or unkindness. I know that to most of you God is so loving and tender that He spares you from all these trials ; yet even then—and then, indeed, all the more out of love and gratitude to Him—you must learn, for Christ's sake, to be unselfish ; and to give up many things ; and to do what others like, not what you would like ; and to be obedient, when you would rather do something else ; and to go to lessons, when you would rather play ; and to go to bed, when you would rather sit up ; and to get up, when you would like to lie in bed ; and to be meek and gentle and forgiving when you are tempted to speak angry words, or to be proud, and wilful, and troublesome. And you should try to learn this all the more because God has been very good to you, and because the Lord Jesus Christ, being so rich, yet for your sakes became poor. Shall I tell you what a princess wrote—the Princess Amelia, who was an aunt of our good Queen Victoria, and who after long and painful sickness and trial died at an early age ?—

Unthinking, idle, wild, and young,  
I laughed and danced, I talked and sung,  
And proud of health, of freedom vain,  
Dreamt not of sorrow, care, or pain.

Oh ! then, in those bright hours of glee,  
I thought the world was made for me.

But when the hour of trial came,  
And sickness shook my feeble frame,  
And folly's gay pursuits were o'er,  
And I could sing and dance no more—  
Oh ! then, I thought how sad 'twould be,  
Were only this world made for me.

You too, my children, must learn that the world was not made for you, but that you must think of others, and be obedient, and sweet, and kind.

2. Now, whenever you are tempted to be rude or wilful or unloving, think that your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who loved you so, and died for you, and is your Good Shepherd, and would fain carry you like lambs in His bosom, was once a little child like you, and wants you to be good and holy as He was.

Was not our Lord a little child,  
Taught by degrees to pray,  
By father dear and mother mild  
Instructed day by day ?

Yes, He was once a little child, subject to His parents at Nazareth, so that He knows all your temptations, all your little troubles. And it was just such little children as you that He took up in His arms, and laid His hands upon, and blessed. Is it not wonderful to think that He, the Lord of Time and all the worlds, came to us once as a little babe, and played as a child in

the shop of the carpenter at Nazareth? There was once—so Luther tells us—a pious, godly bishop who had often earnestly prayed that God would show him what Jesus was like in His youth. Now once the bishop had a dream, and in his dream he saw a poor carpenter working at his trade, and beside him a little boy gathering up chips. Then came in a maiden, clothed in green, who called them both to come to the meal, and set bread and milk before them. All this the bishop seemed to see in his dream, standing behind the door that he might not be seen. Then the little boy began and said, “Why does that man stand there? Will he not come in also and eat with us?” And this so frightened the bishop that he woke. But he need not have been frightened, for does not Jesus say, “If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me.” And whether the dream be true or not, we know that Jesus in His childhood and youth looked and acted like other children, “in fashion like a man,” “yet without sin.”

3. And there have been pure and sweet and holy children who have thought so much of the child Jesus that they have seemed to see Him. There was once a boy whose name was Edmund Rich, and who is called St. Edmund of Canterbury; and his brother tells us that once, when,

at the age of twelve, he had gone into the fields from the boisterous play of his companions, he thought that the child Jesus appeared to him, and said, "Hail, beloved one!" And he, wondering at the beautiful child, said, "Who art thou, for certainly thou art unknown to me?" And the child Jesus said, "How comes it that I am unknown to thee, seeing that I sit by thy side at school, and wherever thou art, there do I go with thee? Look on my forehead, and see what is there written." And Edmund looked, and saw the name "Jesus." "This is my name," said the child; "write it on thy heart, and it shall protect thee from evil." Then He disappeared, on whom the angels desire to look, leaving the little boy Edmund with passing sweetness in his heart.

4. Now you, my children, may never see the child Jesus even in vision as Edmund did, and yet you may all see Him, every one of you, by the eye of faith. There lived, fifteen hundred years ago, a saint whose name was Jerome, and he loved so much the thought of the child Christ, that he left Rome, and went and lived for thirty long years in a cave at Bethlehem, close by the cavern-stable in which Christ was born. And when men wished to invite him by earthly honours to work elsewhere, he said, "Take me not away from the cradle where my Lord was laid. Nowhere can I be happier than there.

There do I often talk with the child Jesus, and say to Him, 'Ah, Lord! how can I repay Thee?' And the Child answers, 'I need nothing. Only sing thou "Glory to God, and peace on earth."' And when I say 'Nay! but I must yield Thee something;' the Holy Child replies, 'Thy silver and thy gold I need not. Give them to the poor. Give me only thy sins to be forgiven.' And then do I begin to weep, and say, 'Oh, Thou blessed Child Jesus, take what is mine, and give me what is Thine!'"

Now in this way, by the eye of faith, you may all see the Child Jesus, and, "unseen yet ever near," you may feel His presence, and He may sit by your side at school, and be with you all day to keep you from harm, and to drive away bad thoughts and naughty tempers, and send His angels to watch over you when you sleep.

5. But remember that the surest way *not* to see Jesus, but to displease Him, is to do anything which you know to be wrong. You must always remember, when you think of Him that—

The most childish sin that man can do  
Is yet a sin which Jesus never did  
When Jesus was a child, and yet a sin  
For which in lowliness He came to die.

So I hope that, morning and evening, you fold your hands and lift up your hearts in

prayer, that in His love to you He may make you like Him, and may come and live with you always even till you die. You need not be afraid what you say to Him. He loves and will hear the simplest prayer, if only it is sincere. Once there was carried into a great hospital a poor little ragged miserable boy, who had been run over in the streets and dreadfully hurt. And all night he kept crying and groaning in his great pain ; and at last a good youth, who lay in the bed next to him, said, "My poor little fellow, won't you pray to Jesus to ease your pain?" But the little wretched sufferer had never heard anything at all about Jesus, and asked who Jesus was. And the youth gently told him that Jesus was Lord of all, and that He had come down to die for us. And the boy answered, "Oh, I can't pray to Him; He's so great and grand, and He would never hear a poor street-boy like me; and I don't know how to speak to Him." "Then," said the youth, "won't you just lift your hand to Him out of bed, and when He passes by He will see it, and will know that you want Him to be kind to you, and to ease your pain?" And the poor crushed suffering boy lifted out of the bed his little brown hand, and soon afterwards he ceased to groan; and when they came to him in the morning the hand and the poor thin arm were still uplifted, but they were stiff and

cold ; for Jesus had indeed seen it, and heard that mute prayer of the agony of that strayed lamb of His fold, and He had grasped the little soiled trembling hand of the sufferer, and had taken him away to that better, happier home, where He will love also to make room for you and me, if we seek Him with all our hearts, and try to do His will.

6. I have only one word more to say to you, and that is to tell you one other way in which you can see that dear Lord who died for you. You may see Him in prayer, and you may see Him by always trying to be good, and you may see Him also in the poor whom He loves, and by being kind to them, and to one another, and to all. You don't know what it is to be sent to school in the morning without a morsel of breakfast, and to come back to find no fire to sit by and nothing but a scanty crust of bread to eat. You don't know what it is to be sent out shivering and in rags into the snow, and to be kicked, beaten, and starved by drunken fathers and mothers. But these sad and cruel things happen to many little English children in these London streets, who are not blest as you are. And Jesus says to you, "In helping these you help Me." Would it not be a terrible thing if some day He were to say to you, "I was hungry and ye gave Me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink : I was naked, and ye clothed Me not ; I

was sick and in prison, and ye did not visit Me"? Ah no! let Him rather shed on you the blessing which He promises to those who give even a cup of cold water in His name to one of His little ones; and then He shall some day say to you, before His glittering angels, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."



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## V.

### Unseen Realities.

“The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—2 COR. iv. 18.



MY friends, we have been living through weeks which will be memorable in history, and amid the unique celebrations of an event which can hardly by any possibility recur in the lifetime of any person now living. To most, perhaps to all of us, it has been, in one way or another, a time of excitement. Numbers have been much occupied about such matters as whether they had or had not received an invitation to this or that ceremonial; or why such a one had a ticket when they had not; or whether the inch-broad realm of their supposed claims has been infringed; or whether the inch-high grandeur of their imaginary dignity has been affronted. What vexation about supposed slights! What woundings of irritable sensibilities! Many of us have been moving through a world of the infinitely little, in which the exaggerated demands of clamorous

egotism have run riot on every side. At such times it is more than ever difficult to keep up our reverence for the true grandeur of human nature. We get a little weary, and long for rest.

But how, if we ourselves have been vulgar with the vulgar, little with the little, selfish with the selfish ; if we, too, have allowed ourselves to be disturbed by trivial annoyances ; how, if we, too, have been guilty of absorbing egotism, and not risen above the eternal spirit of the multitude ? How strange it is that few, even of the best of us, attain to the estimate of things at their right value ! What is the outcome of the mere external pageantry of the Jubilee, apart from the lessons which here at least we have tried to draw from it ? We have seen two or three ceremonials ; are we the wiser, are we the happier, are we the better for them, except so far as we have associated them with thoughts of gratitude to God, with the good resolves of prospect, with the wise experience of retrospect ? At any rate, is it not time now at last to remind ourselves, with Marcus Aurelius, that, apart from our spiritual life, "the idle business of shows, plays on the stage, a bone cast to little dogs, a bit of bread in fishponds, labourings of ants, and burden-carrying runnings to and fro of frightened little mice, puppets pulled by strings—this is what life resembles." Shall a Pagan teach us to estimate things as they are ? Well, this is how that

best and greatest Emperor of Rome thought about his own grandeur : " This Falernian wine," he says, " is only a little grape-juice ; and this imperial purple robe some sheep's wool dyed with the blood of a shell-fish." Whenever we are tempted to be absorbed in worldly things we ought to lay them bare and look at their intrinsic unreality. We have seen princes and great officials resplendent and purpureal in gold, and pearls, and brodered array ; but a man is just as great as he is in the sight of God—no greater. The only true grandeur of men and women is to be *good* men and *good* women ; and wisely does Milton sing of the father of our race—

In himself was all his state.

2. Since, then, we have been living, outwardly at least, amid the display of things seen and temporal, fain would I recall your thoughts from their thrice-doubled emptiness.\* They derive from the unseen eternal things all such small reality as they possess. A person of distinction pays us some small attention, and we are in a flutter of delight ; alas ! in the reality of things some small unnoticed act of daily life, some trivial unregarded kindness, some tiny effort to conquer a besetting vice, some little word spoken in due season, is of ten thousandfold more importance than if all the kings who were ever crowned smiled upon us in full assemblages of

\* Eccl. i. 2.

the nobles, and made us peers and princes, and hung gold chains around our necks.

3. In the Grosvenor Gallery this year there is a picture by a young painter, which is full of suggestiveness. It is called "The Shadow of the Saint." After some glad and gorgeous revel two young Pagan girls are returning home. They are richly dressed; they are flushed with pleasure; the world is all before them; they are beautiful in the roses of their youth. Suddenly, on the moonlit wall, they are startled by catching sight of the shadow of the gaunt weird figure of a man who is kneeling on the top of a pillar with hands uplifted in an agony of supplication. It is the shadow of St. Simeon, the Stylite or pillar-saint, who, in accordance with the deepening superstitions of the fifth century, lived for years on the narrow summit of a column, the sun smiting him by day, the moon by night. Into the heart of those two young girls is suddenly flashed the terrific contrast between the saint's life and theirs. *They* are living exclusively for the things seen and temporal; for the fashion of this world which passeth away; for a pleasureless pleasure which shall sicken sooner than the flowers around their hair. *He*, however crudely, yet with the sincerity of an awful self-sacrifice, is living for the things unseen which are eternal. They are living for youth, which vanishes like the shadow



of a bird's wing ; for a life which is itself as the track of a boat's keel in glassy waves ; for a world which, with all its kingdoms and the glory of them, is but as a bubble which a touch destroys. He is living for God, and for a life beyond life. They, living in pleasure, are dead while they live ; he, dead to pleasure, dead to self, is alive unto God. The form which his self-denial takes is corrupted by a thousand perversions of error and ignorance ; but ignorance and error are but as motes in the heavenly sunbeam of sincerity, and in a distracted and dissolving age the Stylite was at least a witness to the men and women of his time that they had souls ; that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth ; that the life is more than meat and the body than raiment ; that he who findeth his life shall lose it, and he who loseth his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, the same shall find it.

4. Awakenment then to the truth that our lives are in substance as a wreath of foam upon the water, and in duration as but a moment in the being of the eternal silence ; awakenment to the existence of the eternal unseen realities—how much lies in those words ! Which is our condition at this moment ? Does it most resemble that of the young girls or that of the awful saint ? Are we living for the shadow or for the substance ? for the reality or for the dream ?

5. The poet Wordsworth describes a boy whom he had known, a boy who died early, into whose heart, as he wandered by the cliffs of Windermere, the voice of mountain torrents was carried,

Or the visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind  
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received  
Into the steady bosom of the lake.

Now it is rarely enough that men find leisure from their strenuous frivolities to notice even the glory and wonder and power of the world around them ; but alas ! how many die without having once taken in the thought of God, without love of God, without prayer to God, without obedience to God. Yet to live so is not to live at all. It is but the beating of the pulse ; it is but the drawing of the breath ; it is but to be as the beasts that perish. God and Death and Judgment and Eternity—these things stare us in the face, loom everywhere around us, and to them we are deaf and blind, while trifles lighter than air assume to our distorted vision an immense significance.

6. What shall arouse us from this torpor and stupidity? We read in many Christian biographies of men, who, walking after their own hearts' lusts, and eating the fruit of their own devices, have suddenly and for the first time

been startled into reality. It is told of Raymond Lully, the *Doctor illuminatus*, once known for his valour and gallantries, that his whole life was changed when a lady, whom he had been wooing, showed him that she was stricken with a mortal and terrible disease. It is told of Francis of Assisi, in his youthful gaiety, that the experiences of defeat and imprisonment turned him from a worldling into a saint. It is told of Ignatius Loyola, the brave Spanish cavalier, that the agonies of a fractured limb, which blighted all his life, drove him to give up his soul to God. It is told of Francis Xavier that he was utterly disenchanted of the world's pleasures by the ever-repeated question of Ignatius, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" It is told of Luther that the sudden death of a friend and fellow-student by a flash of lightning broke up within him the fountains of the great deep of religious emotion. It is told of De Rancé, the reformer of the Monastery of La Trappe, that, when he was a dissolute and worldly priest, he was shocked into soberness by coming unexpectedly upon the dead body of the lady whom he loved. It is told of Colonel Gardiner that, in an hour of guilt and shame, he suddenly saw a vision of Jesus on the Cross, and was startled into true repentance. Why should I go on? No doubt in buffetings of calamity, in prostrations

of illness, in rude shocks of divine intimation—or again, in spasms of agonizing disenchantment, when the Dead Sea apples have crumbled into bitterness, and the world itself has seemed at a touch to slip into dust, like the body of some exhumed king—men have been brought, in one moment, to recognize the things which, though unseen, are alone eternal. Having been blind, lo ! at the touch of Christ they see ! But is it not sad and strange that such penal dispensations should be so often necessary ? Should not Reason and Conscience, and universal experience, suffice us for this end ? The myrrh does not yield its fragrance unless it be incensed and crushed ; the scented tree must be smitten by the axe before its perfume can flow forth ; but why should life be only rendered holy and serious by pain and retribution ? Ah ! my friends, depend upon it that God does not willingly afflict us ; that His afflictions are meant in saving mercy, because other means of arousing us have failed. How often does He say to us—“ Be ye not like the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle lest they fall upon thee.” How much more gladly would He say to us, “ I will guide thee with mine eye.”

7. My friends, we cannot live lives worth living, or lives worth anything, until we live in the light

of the unseen. One of the noblest of human souls, in the grandest of visions, tells us how he was saved from wandering blindly among the wild beasts in the dark and savage wood, how he was enabled to climb the difficult hill into the Paradise of God's sunshine, and to gain forgiveness and strength through Christ our Lord. And how was he delivered? By the combined influences of reason, and divine knowledge, and heavenly grace, leading him to see the things that are and to see them as they are. He was led by these great angels to face the eternal realities. He trod first the ghastly abysses of hell; he saw as with his own eyes its loathly fiends, its rage and suicidal agony, its flakes of slow-raining fire, its pools of blighting ice, its rivers of boiling blood. And then, escaping like some half-drowned swimmer, with difficult spent breath, he toiled painfully up the steep mountain of penitence, while angel wings ever and anon brushed away from his brow its fatal brands. And then, at last, purified by the blood of his Saviour, he walked in light as God is in the light, and, mingling amid the living rubies and topazes of heaven, he gazed on the throne of the Almighty. It was a vision, but a vision which may Christ open all our eyes to see! Would that all our old men might see such visions, and all our young men dream such dreams! For such dreams are the sole

realities. The unseen things are all around us; they alone are eternal. Get rid altogether of the error of an ignorant theology which confounds the eternal with the future. St. Paul does not say "the things which are *future* are eternal," but "the things which are *not seen* are eternal." Unseen they may be to us, yet they are neither distant nor future; they are here; they are now; they alone give any meaning or grandeur to the beatings of the heart. Phrasemongers describe an execution, and say that the man was "launched into eternity;" friends speak of a death-bed, and say that their friend "passed into eternity." Such talk is mere confusion. No man can pass into eternity, for he is already in it. The dead are no more in eternity now than they always were, or than every one of us is at this moment. We may ignore the things eternal; shut our eyes hard to them; live as though they had no existence; nevertheless Eternity is around us here, now, at this moment, at all moments; and it will have been around us every day of our ignorant, sinful, selfish lives. Its stars are ever over our head, while we are so diligent in the dust of our worldliness, or in the tainted stream of our desires. The dull brute globe moves through its blue ether, and knows it not; even so our souls are bathed in eternity, and are never conscious of it. As little can we get rid

of the ethereal air of Eternity as the world can get rid of the blue spaces of ether through which it moves.

8. Let us then strive—ere it be too late for this life—to see Him who is invisible, and the things which are unseen. It is only to the earthly life, only to the sin-blinded eyes, that God is invisible, or that the Eternal is unseen. And if we are indeed so plunged in guilt and folly that we cannot see them, let us pray to God that He would reveal them to us at all costs. The fearful youth in Dothan, when the Prophet opened his eyes, saw all the mountain around him full of chariots of fire and horses of fire. Oh! if we were but awakened out of the torpor and self-seeking of a life without God, if but one ray of God's light could stream into our souls—how would that glory out-dazzle the feeble and flickering tapers of earth!—how would its aching, revealing, overpowering splendour show to us in one moment the differences between the death that we call life, and the life which we regard as death. And sometimes, as we have seen, it does happen that thus suddenly God opens the eyes of men; but it is not the normal way. He leaves us ordinarily to the common dispensations of His daily Providence, and if we be not utterly faithless, and utterly absorbed in our own frivolities, they are abundantly sufficient to emphasize

the lessons taught us by Christ's Gospel and Christ's example.

Beneath our feet and o'er our head  
Are equal warnings given,  
Beneath us lie the countless dead,  
Above us is the Heaven.

Let these suffice us. Death is everywhere; God is everywhere: will we not see them? The lesson which I have tried to impress upon you is the lesson of many Scriptures. It is "Walk by faith, not by sight." It is—"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." It is—"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." It is—"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."



## VI.

### Wherewith to Measure Life.

“According to the measure of a man, that is of an angel.”--  
REV. xxi. 17.



HERE is a wonderful significance in these words, a significance which—(as is so often the case in Scripture)—is perhaps far beyond, and even outside of, their immediate application. The measure of a man is here identified with the measure of an angel. Here is a divine scale of measurement, and one which, if we would apply it to our lives, would make them sublime indeed!

I. *Sursum corda*—“lift up your hearts”—is the ancient appeal of our liturgies which imparts the flagging wings of devotion, and stimulates us in the midst of worship, more and ever more, to raise our aspirations heavenwards. In Cicero's famous “Dream of Scipio,” the hero's spirit passes in vision to the region of stars, and since his eyes are ever turned to the small earth which he has left, his guide says to him! “How long will you keep your eyes fixed

downwards?" It is the question which comes to the souls of men in a chorus of appeals, if we would but listen to them! It is the curse of our race that, though God made our souls, like our bodies, upright, and fitted to gaze on heaven, we walk, like Mammon, with earthward eyes—as though we sought heaven there; or as though our thoughts were more with the trodden gold, than with

Aught divine or holy else enjoyed  
In vision beatific.

You will all remember the powerful allegory of Bunyan, interpreted farther by the genius of a living painter, of the man raking, with eager wolfish eyes, amid dross and baubles, while over him, wholly unheeded, stands his sorrowing angel with the despised and starry crown. If we look on earthly treasures and domains it should rather be, as Dante did, when bidden to gaze down from the seventh circle of the heavens. "I saw this globe," he says,

So pitiful of semblance, that perforce  
It moved my smile; and him in truth I hold  
For wisest who esteems it least: whose thoughts  
Elsewhere are fixt.

Think how Christ contemned the offer of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them! It is no slight matter that we are considering. Men will be lofty or low according to the

objects to which they direct their souls ; according to the scale with which they measure their lives. If they think on things pure, and true, and lovely, they will reflect these qualities, even as the angels reflect the glory of God on their many-coloured plumes. But if their ideal be dwarfed and miserable, their lives too will be small and mean. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of having worthy ideals. Tell me whom you admire and I will tell you the drift of your character. Show me what your ideal is, and I will show you what you yet may be.

2. You may judge of this by large as well as by small examples. Take in your hands the great book of History, and see how grievously nations have suffered when their multitudes have been misled by false admirations. Such ideals are like the wandering fires which flicker only over the swamps of death. Athens was great while she had such statesmen as an Aristides and Perikles ; the sun of her glory set when an immoral demagogue, like Kleon, became the idol of her mobs. Republican Rome was great, when she was led by a Fabricius or a Scipio ; she sank into abysses of degradation when her youths followed a Clodius or a Catiline. Imperial Rome was never a worse sink of iniquity than when a Nero was popular, though he soiled the very name of humanity ; she was

never happier than when, in each honourable home, was seen the noble bust of Marcus Aurelius. Watch the certain degeneracy of nations when they are demoralized by the ignoble brilliancy of a bad success; when the best leaders are too good for the days in which they live; when the sensibility of honour is branded as weakness, and unscrupulous recklessness regarded as leadership. In what sort of state was Italy when Cæsar Borgia magnetized her admiration? Did France suffer nothing from the sanctimonious, sanguinary, licentious pomposity of Louis XIV. or the unblushing depravity of the Regent Orleans? Was there no difference between the moral nobleness of England when Puritans ruled and Milton sang, and when harlots toyed with the crown of the Confessor and the few faithful men were shocked by the plays of Wycherley and the orgies of Whitehall?

3. But perhaps we may be misled if we make our inductions too broad. Look then at sections and phases of society only. Consider how any class of society is degraded when it acquiesces in, much more when it admires, immoral favourites. How many lives were shipwrecked, how many souls imperilled in England when the drunkenness, the gambling, the adulteries of her ruling class were regarded as venial peccadilloes; when men thought that they had

covered Wilberforce with ridicule if they called him "Saint," and when Pitt was openly sneered at because his life was pure. What becomes of classes to whom a drunken prize-fighter or a ribald slanderer appears a consummate hero? or to whom such a thing as Beau Brummel seems the summit of gentility? or who rush to erect statues to a swindling speculator? Or look again at a Public School. Is its case ever more desperate than when the popular hero among its boys is a boy of debased character and corrupted habits? If you want to see degradation spread with the rapidity of wild fire, rage with the fierceness of an epidemic, observe what takes place in a school or a college when admiration for the Belial grace of some child of the devil confers prominence upon everything which is execrable and impure.

4. To each of us then individually, and to our nation, and to our Church, it is of supreme importance that we lift our eyes to the galaxy of great examples and reflect the luminous virtue of heavenly ideals. And that is what I mean by measuring life with the measure of a man, that is of an angel. Oh! if men would only think what it would be, in just and natural retribution, to spend an eternity with the wretches in whose steps they have secretly walked! How will the treacherous dealer, who has dealt treacherously with his friend, or his family, or his

country, like to be welcomed into Gehenna by the face of Judas and to writhe under the traitor's kiss? How will the unclean like to be condemned to the companionship of those whom their sins have blighted—to be indissolubly bound to the corpse of dead desires in that darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth?

But bad men, when they have become thoroughly bad, get to hate and curse the silent reproach of great ideals; and if, like the devil, they stand abashed for one involuntary moment in the presence of virtue, the next moment they are striving to corrupt its stainlessness with temptation, or to stain its memory with lies. When you see bad men, stimulated by party hatred, or steeped in social vice endeavouring to drag honoured names through the mire, there you see the very work of him who is called the Accuser of the brethren. The sole hope of humanity is in its good and holy men. All earth's purest and noblest come and lay garlands at the feet of these statues, but the crowd of the vulgar clamber up the pedestal with no other object than to injure and to deface.

Hence one of the worst of signs in the present seems to me to be the fondness of men, and above all of the young, to read and dwell on what is ignoble, not what is lofty; what is petty, not what is great. How can a man have

any light or sweetness left in him who delights to feed himself on calumny and falsehood until the devil has drawn down his soul into incurable littleness, as the worm "draws in the withered leaf, and makes it earth?"

5. On the other hand, I have hope for youth, I have faith in manhood, when I see men choosing lofty ideals, turning with scorn from all that is frivolous, leaving things base to perish of their own natural corruption, making of their imaginations a picture-gallery from which they exclude everything that defileth, claiming their affinity with all things worthy, and measuring their lives with the measure of a man, that is of an angel. Such thoughts produce pure and high-souled men. A great writer tells us how once such a youth came into his rooms, and taking up by chance Andrew Marvell's poem of "The Nymph complaining of the Death of her Fawn," read the lines—

Had it lived long, it would have been  
Lilies without, roses within.

The young man died, and "I felt," he says, "that I had entertained an angel visitant. The fawn of Marvell's imagination survives in my memory as the fitting image to recall this beautiful youth; a soul glowing like the rose of morning with enthusiasm, a character white as the lilies in its purity."

6. Can one ask, without a sigh, whether it is a common thing for men thus to measure their lives with the measure of a man, that is of an angel?

i. The other day a new journal was started, and in the first sentence of its prospectus, I am told, it had the words that "undoubtedly a man's first consideration in life is how to make money." It was meant quite seriously; it was not in the least intended as a satire. And to what multitudes among us is not the love of money a root of all kinds of evils? If all were to go home and consider what proportion—shall I say, rather, how insignificant a fraction—of their means they spare for the needs of their Church, the glory of their God, and the good of their fellow-men, I think that they would blush. Ah! let not our souls sink into Mammon-worship, which is like a sea of pitch, bubbling only with the sighs of those who welter therein. Can you bury that dross with you in your graves? Do you know how soon it will drop from your relaxing grasp? Can you aver that it gives you any real happiness?—But the worshipper of Mammon—by what does he measure his life? Is it not by the measure of the wretchedest spirit that fell?—not by the measure of a man, that is of an angel.

ii. Or the man who has by slow degrees slipped into that most hapless, most abject



thing—a drunkard ; the helpless bonds slave of a dead poison, for which he destroys himself by moral and mental suicide ; sinking himself lower and lower into shame and ruin, into penury and rags ; becoming, perhaps, in some drunken orgy, a felon, or even a murderer. Oh, by what measure does such a man measure his life ? It is by the measure of a fiend—not by the measure of a man, that is of an angel.

iii. Or, again, they who, like natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, corrupting themselves in those things which they know naturally, sell themselves to do evil, and to work all uncleanness with greediness ; they who can dare for their own vilest selfishness to poison the blood and degrade the morals of the race, making it sometimes better for themselves, better for mankind, if they had not been born—by what measure do they measure life ? Is it not with the measure of a beast—not with the measure of a man, that is of an angel ?

iv. Or, once more, the average, everyday, ordinary man, whom St. Paul calls the carnal or vulgarly selfish man, whose whole life is the common average of compromise ; the Mr. Anything, the Mr. Facing-both-ways, who never knew what it was, even as a boy, to be fired with a great thought or to glow with a noble enthusiasm ; who has done nothing for the world beyond consuming its fruits in selfishness, æ

though it were only meant to be a feeding-trough—by what measure does he measure life? Is it not by the measure of a world without souls—not by the measure of a man, that is of the angel?


Oh! let us strive that we may not be like these! For in one last word, he who would make life what God meant it to be, he who would make the angel's measure a man's measure, must learn above all things one great divine lesson in two aspects. He must learn respect for humanity; respect and reverence for human nature in himself, respect and reverence for it in others. Those subjects are far too large to pursue now at the end of a sermon, but we have learnt the very deepest secret of them when we remember that true human nature is not only angelic but divine; that Jesus Christ our Lord became man, and so took up the manhood into God. In our faith in the Incarnation lies the very heart and essence of our Christianity. The most awful sanctions of purity, the most living impulses to nobleness, the most powerful stimulus to active service, lie in that. To purity—for know ye not that your bodies are temples of Christ, who dwelleth in you, except ye be reprobates? To nobleness—for He taught us to follow His example and walk in His footsteps; to loving service—for can there be work more nobly blessed than to live for the good of those souls

for which Christ died? Ah! he who has these aims, he who measures his life by the measuring reed of these high purposes, measures it as angels measure it, and so measures it indeed with the measure of a man, that is of an angel—nay, rather of the King of the Angels. For what are the angels themselves even, in respect of Christ? What but “sparks from the un-emptiable fountain of his glory;” what but “dew-drops on the head of the bridegroom lost in the splendour of His hair.” They may help us; the thought of them may ennoble us; their glittering faces may look down upon us from the lucent cloud of witnesses, compassionate and pure. They may be to us as our “high-born kinsmen,” we may see their waving robes in the flash of the sunlight, we may hear their voices in the music of the wind: but their glory is but an effulgence of Christ’s glory; they are but ministering spirits of that Lord of whom it is written—“And let all the Angels of God worship Him!”

## VII.

### The Essentials of Prayer.

“Then answered they, and said before the King, That Daniel . . . . maketh his petition three times a day.”—DANIEL vi. 13.

HE noble story of Daniel, and how, preferring the peril of death to the abandonment of prayer, “his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime,” naturally turns our thoughts to the subject of prayer. But it is, of course, impossible in one sermon to treat comprehensively or exhaustively of that great theme; nor is it at all my wish to do so. The object of this sermon will be what I desire the object of all sermons to be—namely, as simply as I can, to help forward myself and you as we climb the uphillward path of the Christian life. For that Christian life no means of grace is so absolutely indispensable as prayer. The soul of man is like a kindled brand; so long as the air breathes on it, it will retain till the last its genial warmth

and crimson glow; but let the air stagnate around it, and, flake on flake, the white ashes will gather over it, and the fire will die away within it, and under those ashes it will be left black and charred, a cold and useless log. What the breath of wind is on the glowing brand, that prayer is to the soul. Let a man or a woman live a prayerless life, and all the light and the fire and the glow, all the wisdom and generosity and love will die away, because these are the result of spiritual grace alone; and covered with the dead, white embers of its own selfishness and pride, the soul will soon become cold and dead and hard—a useless thing, half consumed with impenitence and sin.

Or again (and I entreat you do not regard these as figures of speech, or metaphors, but as the clearest way of bringing before you the deepest realities), the soul of man has been compared to a field. Sometimes over the fields there passes a wind which dries the plants, and then we see their withered stems droop to the earth; but when the dew falls they are refreshed and lift their fading flowers. So there are burning winds—of passion and of avarice, of trial and of temptation—which pass over the souls of men and wither them. Prayer is the dew of God, which falls upon them and restores their languishing beauty.

And since that prayer is of such excellent

value, let us plainly and simply try to see first, what prayer is ; next, what it may do for us ; and thirdly, what is necessary to make it true prayer, and something more than the dumb moan of the suffering animal, something more than the scream of the hawk or the murmur of the gnat. Something more?—alas ! is it not too often something less?—less sincere, with less of meaning in it than the roar of the young lions when they suffer hunger, or the cry of the young ravens in their wind-rocked nest?

I. First, then, what is prayer? Some of you will think at once of the words of that exquisite hymn:—

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered, or unexpressed ;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of the eye  
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try  
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach  
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice  
Returning from his ways,  
While angels in their songs rejoice,  
And cry, " Behold he prays ! "

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,  
The Christian's native air,  
His watchword at the gates of death,  
He enters heaven with prayer.

You could not, indeed, think of a better answer than this in general, but you may desire something different and more specific. Prayer, then, according to the definition of many Christian writers, is "a lifting up of a pure mind unto God, whereby we ask something of Him." But there are various kinds of prayer. "I exhort," says St. Paul, "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." Here there are four kinds of prayer—*supplications*—i.e., special petitions to supply our need, and because of our insufficiency; *general prayers*—the reverent adoration of God, the expression of our entire devotion; *intercessions*—prayers both for others and for ourselves, urgent, intense, personal solicitations, poured forth because of our confidence as children towards the heavenly Father of whom we ask; *thanksgivings*—showing that we go to God not only because of our hope, but because of our gratitude; not only from our own self-interest, but from our love. Prayer, then, is something more than the uplifting of a pure soul to God, in which we ask something of Him. It is also "a friendly talking with the Lord, from a high and kindled affection. It is the pouring

out of a contrite heart, with a sure persuasion that God will grant our requests. It is a Christian's intercourse with God, his sanctuary in troubles, his remedy for sins, his cure of griefs; it is an abstract and summary of religion; it celebrates God's attributes and confesses His glory and reveres His person, and implores His aid and gives thanks for His blessings; and as regards our own state of mind when we are praying, it is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the rest of our cares, the calm of our tempest, the issue of a quiet mind, the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness." My brethren, let us fully understand this at the outset—true prayer is much more than asking. "It is praise, it is congratulation, it is a colloquy in which the soul engages with the All-wise and the All-holy; it is a basking in the sunshine, varied by ejaculations of thankfulness to the Sun of Righteousness for His light and His warmth. It is nothing less than the whole spiritual action of the soul turned towards God as its true and adequate object, and in this sense it is clear that, as to much prayer, the question whether it is answered or not (a question which is by sceptics so often and so coarsely urged) can never arise, for the simple reason that no answer is asked for." For such prayer is, to a very great extent, its own answer. Its blessedness requires no further fruition than itself. In such high hours



thought dies away into rapture and beatitude. As distinguished from the mere ejaculations of our agony, or cries of our alarm, or reiterations of our selfishness, I would define prayer as the reverent intercourse and intense communion of the soul of the Christian with his Father in Heaven.

II. This, then, being what prayer is, do you ask what prayer can do for us? I answer without hesitation, *Everything!* More than one saint like St. Francis, and like Wesley, has left behind him the record that God has never refused him anything for which he seriously prayed. It can gain for us everything; not, perhaps, everything that we wish—for, like the Israelites of old, we may wish what is very evil for us—but everything that we *want*. Christ gave no limit to His promise, "Ask and ye shall receive." In the old world prayer subdued kingdoms, it stopped the mouths of lions, it opened and closed the doors of heaven, in the mid fires of the furnace it set the angel of the dew. Do you say that it works no miracles now? I am not so sure of that. If we had but faith enough I believe that we should still remove mountains, still dispel the clouds, still draw the rain from heaven, still raise the sick, still open prisons, still loose the chains of the innocent, still find an anodyne for the anguish of the distressed. And are these the only miracles? Are spiritual miracles

nothing? Is it no miracle by prayer to do what we can all do—wash away our sins, repel our temptations, quench persecutions, encourage the faint-hearted, lead back the wanderers, feed the poor, raise the fallen, stay the falling, uphold them that stand? Is it no miracle to make the rich humble and the poor contented? No miracle to touch the hearts of the selfish, and open the purse-strings of the mean? Are you in sorrow? Prayer can make your affliction sweet and strengthening. Are you in gladness? Prayer can add to your joy a celestial perfume. Are you in extreme danger, whether from outward or inward enemies? Prayer can set at your right hand an angel whose touch “could shatter a millstone into smaller dust than the flour it grinds,” and whose glance could lay an army low. When St. Felix of Nola was hotly pursued by murderers, he took refuge in a cave, and instantly, over the rift of it, the spiders wove their webs, and seeing this, the murderers passed by. Then said the saint, “Where God is not, a wall is but a spider’s web; where God is, a spider’s web is as a wall.” What will prayer do for you? I answer, All that God can do for you. When He bids us pray it is as though He said to us, “Ask what I shall give thee.” We toil and moil and scrape, and make ourselves anxious about the dust and dross of earth, and all the while God is holding forth to us in vain the crown of

immortality, and the golden keys of the treasures of heaven !

III. But having thus touched briefly on what prayer is, and what it can do for us, let us touch with equal brevity on other points. And here do not think that I shall stop to give you any external or mechanical rules. All our Saviour says is, "Ask," "Seek," "Knock." You can pray as well on Gerizim as in Jerusalem, and in London as on Gerizim, and in a drawing-room or a workshop as on Sinai, and in your own room as in the holiest minster, and by the altar of your own bedsides as on the slopes of Olivet. "Dost thou wish to pray in a temple? Pray then in thyself, but first be thou a temple of the Lord." It is right—common sense teaches us, common experience teaches us, the example of our Saviour teaches us—that there should be also special times of prayer, and solemn places ; but Scripture teaches us that there is no time improper, and no place unacceptable, be it the subterranean prison, or the sick bed, or the tossing ship, or the whale's belly, or the lion's den. Nor does it teach us that prayer need be long or short. The seven words of the publican, "God, be merciful to me the sinner," gained him the inestimable boon of forgiveness. The nine words of the dying thief, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in Thy kingdom," flung wide open for him that very day the gates of

Paradise. Nay, even the voiceless prayer of the Magdalene, the prayer that lay in dishevelled tresses, in silent tears, won for her those precious words, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." So that if you ask when, where, and how to pray, I answer with a good archbishop of former days, "When? always without ceasing. Where? in all places, especially the house of prayer. How? from the heart, lifting up pure and clean hands, that is to say, in faith and in love. Our prayer feathered with these two wings flieth straight into heaven."

And if you ask me one question more, and say, "*What* should we pray for?" I answer, "Everything which you need." Do you inquire whether you may pray for earthly blessings? I answer, Certainly you may, both for yourselves and for those whom you love. Remember only two things—one, that to ask only or mainly for earthly blessings is a dreadful dwarfing and vulgarization of the grandeur and holiness of prayer, as though you asked for a handful of grass when you might ask for a handful of emeralds; the other that you must always ask for earthly desires with absolute submission of your own will to God's, lest God should grant you your own bane, and ruin you at your own desire, giving it you, and sending leanness into your bones. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be

added unto you. That prayer of an unhappy queen, "Oh, keep me innocent; make others great!"—that prayer of a great saint, "Give me, O Lord, a noble heart, which nothing earthly may drag down!"—that prayer of a sinful yet saintly king, "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God; let Thy loving spirit lead me into the land of righteousness"—those are amongst the best prayers I know, because they are most in accordance with that prayer which Christ Himself has taught us, which, out of seven petitions, has but one for any earthly blessing, and that only for daily bread, and of which the keynote is, "Our Father, which art in heaven."

IV. But remember, lastly, that prayer will not be heard unless it has certain qualities, without which prayer is not prayer at all. What, then, is necessary to all prayer in order that it may be true prayer? I can mention but one or two of the main essentials and those but briefly; and yet sufficiently, if you will test them for yourselves.

i. The first requisite, then, is *faith*. A true prayer must be animated by faith; faith in the God to whom it is addressed; faith that He will hear, and if it be a right petition will truly answer it. He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. <sup>10</sup>Christ, when He

prayed, went up sometimes into a mountain; we, when we pray, must always breathe this mountain air of faith; we must climb up to the rock which is higher than we. We must consciously believe and feel that we are passing by prayer into that awful solitude of the soul, which is the very audience-chamber of the Almighty, or our prayer will soon become as meaningless and as mechanical as those which are muttered in the monotone of unknown tongues, or as those of the Tartar, who writes his supplications on the fans of a mill, and thinks that prayer is being offered if the mill be but caused to spin round by wind or wave.

ii. Then, secondly, our prayers must be uttered in *sincerity*; they must not be of the lips, but of the heart. The prayer of the wicked, who still in their hearts mean to be wicked, is sin. There is no preparation for worship like singleness of heart. "I will wash mine hands in innocency; and so will I go to thine altar, O Lord!" "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart . . . . He that doeth these things shall never be moved." How can *he* invite God into his heart whose heart is full of idols which he will not reject? How can God dwell in the same heart with Mammon? What communion hath Christ with Belial? How

can he pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," whose soul is full of malice, envy, and hate? How can the drunkard pray, "Lead us not into temptation," who means that very day to go to the public-house? How can the tradesman pray to be just and honest who has no intention to mend his false balance, or improve his adulterated goods? Therefore cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Ah, my brethren! the very worst and deadliest of all hindrances to sincerity of prayer is a bosom sin. It is like an evil spirit seated on the temple-roof, mocking at every hollow utterance, and scattering the unhallowed incense with the beating of his wings. Ah no, my brethren! we cannot be both pardoned and retain the offence. If we pray with a secret determination to continue in sin we pray false prayers, and cannot be heard. It is as if a man prayed to be healed, while shrinking from the necessary pain and the necessary effort of healing, he determined to leave the shaft-head rankling in his wound. Oh! try to make your prayers sincere! It is said that in Japan there is a prayer called the "Mirror-prayer"—the worshipper holds up a mirror or looking-glass, and on beholding his image in it says, "O God, look into my heart as I see my face in this glass." Does it not imply the same thought as David did, when he said, "Try me, oh God, and

seek the ground of my heart ; prove me and examine my thoughts" ?

iii. Then, thirdly, our prayers must be offered with *earnestness*. Jacob's prayer was truly called a wrestling with God. It is thus that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. "Prayer is as an arrow ; if it be drawn up but a little it goes not far, but if it be pulled up to the head flies strongly, and pierces deep ; if it be but dribbled forth of careless lips it falls down at our foot. The strength of an ejaculation sends it up into heaven and fetches down a blessing. Heartless motions do but teach us to deny ; fervent suits offer violence both to earth and heaven." Will you let our great poet teach you ? Will you remember what the wicked king says in the splendid tragedy ?—

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below ;  
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

iv. Again, true prayer must be sustained by *perseverance*. We must pray without ceasing. We ought always to pray, and not to faint. If we pray often we shall pray oftener. How is it (is it not a shame to our Christianity ?) that the votaries of false religions are, not rarely, far more frequent and far more fervent in their prayers than we Christians are ? More



than once are we told that our blessed Lord prayed all night long, and what He taught us by example He taught also by precept. "The friend, who is at rest with his family, will rise at last to give a loaf to the hungry applicant. The unjust judge yields in the end to the resistless eagerness of the widow's cry. Our Lord's blessing on the Syro-Phœnician woman is the consecration of importunity with God." Let, then, our prayers be "the key that opens the day, and the lock that shuts the night," and also from morning to night our staff and stay in all our labours, enabling us to go cheerfully up to the mount of God.

v. And, lastly, prayer in its highest effort should be *free from distraction*. It requires a "holy vacuity" of thought, a "denudation of the mind" from the vanity and the uncleanness of earthly images. And so true prayer requires preparation. "When thou prayest," says our Saviour, "enter into thy chamber, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." She who is cumbered with much serving cannot sit duly at her Saviour's feet, nor can they be guests at the King's banquet whose hearts are with their land or their oxen, with their pleasures or in their purse. "Before praying," says the Book of Wisdom, "prepare the heart, and be not as a man who tempts God." The soul that tries to soar up to God

with no attempt to allay the violence of its own passions and the darkness of its own sin, is like that little lark, described in one of the greatest and most eloquent of our divines, rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; "but the poor bird was beaten back by the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motions made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of its wings till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over, and then it made a prosperous flight, and did ride and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministrations here below."

Ah, my brethren! when we think over all this the sad thought rises, Have we ever prayed? Do we really know what true prayer is—so inspired by faith, so animated by sincerity, so filled with earnestness, so sustained by perseverance, so free from distractions? "We have said our prayers," you answer, "morning and evening for ever so many years." Yes, my friends, doubtless you have, and perhaps it was some beloved mother who first taught you to fold your hands together, and bow your heads

beside her knee. But, ah ! to say our prayers is one thing ; to pray is quite another. It was no languid formula learnt by heart—it was no drowsy and mechanical petition—it was no earthly request for some selfish end—it was no cry of a Baal worshipper on Carmel striving to arouse his idol into impossible animation, that Saul was uttering when the Lord said of him to Ananias, “ Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight and inquire for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold he prayeth.” No, but it was an impassioned pouring forth of all the heart ; it was an awful wrestling of the soul with God ; it was the resistless cry of determined agony, “ I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Ah ! if there were more prayer there would be less sin, for it has been truly said that either sinning makes us leave off praying, or praying would make us leave off all wilful sinning. My brethen ! young and old, rich and poor, Pharisee or Publican, will you now make this sermon what God means it to be, a direct and immediate message to your soul by doing one thing, namely, by praying—not *saying your prayers*, but *praying*—really praying to God, praying, perhaps, for the first time in your lives, one real prayer, for yourselves, for me, for this land, for all mankind ? If you cannot get farther, will you pray for yourselves, for your own souls ? Will you wrestle with God for


peace and purity, for pardon and change of heart?

Oh Thou by whom we come to God,  
The life, the truth, the way,  
The path of prayer Thyself hath trod,  
Lord, teach us how to pray !

## VIII.

### The Sanctity of Principle.

"A perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God."  
JOB ii. 3.

MID the minutiae of controversial theology; amid the multiplication of ceremonies, rites, and forms; amid the ceaseless elaboration of systems; amid the ambitious self-assertion of parties, their intrigues, their jealousies, their struggles, their ignoble warfare—it is most desirable that not only those of us who are weary of all this wordy strife, but that all of us alike should constantly look back to the simplest and most primary elements of the revealed will of God. That is what I shall try to do this afternoon. I shall not indeed ask you to rest there. The experience of mankind proves sufficiently that something more is needed. But since we, as Christians, do through God's mercy presumably possess that something more, even for us it may prove a searching test, and a blessed stimulus, to cast a backward glance at the

fundamental truths of religious life. Man is no angel ; he cannot soar to the blue sky or storm heaven with angels' wings. Slowly and toilsomely, and step by step, must he mount, as on a ladder, above his earthly and sensual tendencies, and never can he venture to scorn the low degrees by which he did ascend. Now the lowest step of the religious life is obedience to the moral law, and our time can never be lost when we are gazing at large duties based upon infinite, eternal sanctions. The plain Ten Commandments are to our Christian life as the primitive granite on which the world is built.

2. The moral law ! Perhaps, like the young ruler, you think that quite too elementary, and some may be inclined to say, "All these things have I kept from my youth." Well, I do not think so. We look round us on the so-called religious and the so-called irreligious world, on what calls itself the Church and on what is called the World. And we do see indeed a true Church—an *Ecclesiola in Ecclesiâ*—a Church drawn from all denominations—Romanists, Protestants, Anglicans, Dissenters—a Church composed of none but the good and the sincere, who, because they are meek, gentle, humble, devout, loving, are all of one religion, and who (as William Penn said) shall all meet and know each other in heaven when the various masks and liveries which now hide them from each

other have been stripped away. But what we see in general is the great mass of mankind, living faithfully indeed to this or that requirement of the moral law, but each ignoring it, despising it, trampling on it, thinking that they will escape its penalties in some one particular direction of besetting sin: and when we consider the lives of those who specially regard themselves as the Church—of men who hold themselves to be religious persons—we constantly observe how they weaken the moral law in theory, and show themselves indifferent to it in practice. They lay much greater stress on outward observances and on orthodox belief. But externalism and orthodoxy, both together, are lighter than vanity itself, if they are dissociated from moral rectitude. A man may be as technically orthodox as Torquemada, as rubrically scrupulous as Charles V., and yet may deserve the condemnation of men and the most heavy wrath of God. They who profess to belong to the religious world would not indeed murder, or commit adultery, or steal; but they too often forget that there are other things in the Ten Commandments besides these. "He who keepeth the whole law," says St. James, with profound insight, "and yet offendeth in one point is guilty of all." Why? Because he breaks the principle of obedience; because he violates the majesty of law as law. Most of us

belong, I suppose, nominally to the religious world. Ought it never startle us to observe that some of the most overwhelming denunciations of the Saviour and of His Apostles are aimed at the religious world? that Jesus told the Pharisees that the publicans and harlots were being more freely admitted into His kingdom than they? The members of the religious world do not often commit flagrant crimes; but have they never so much as read in the Commandments: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"? and do they never break that Commandment? Have they ever noticed that Christ and His Apostles again and again place "Charity" at the very summit of all the virtues, and sum up the whole law in love? And do they not constantly display that spirit of hatred which brands their Christianity as essentially anti-Christian, and their gospel of love as the bad spell of hate? When they do this let them be warned that the man who strives to be faithful to the moral law, be he even a heathen or a heretic, may be nearer to the kingdom of God than they. The Pharisees were conspicuous for orthodoxy and scrupulosity, and yet Christ's words to them were charged with eternal lightnings. The Good Samaritan was a heretic, and yet Christ chose him as a type of the noblest self-denial: not (observe) not because scrupulous obser-



vances are a sin, or because heresy is not an evil, but because holy living is transcendently dearer to God and more necessary for man than theoretic orthodoxy and outward conformities. "By their fruits ye shall know them." St. Jerome and others have dared to alter that verse into "By their doctrines ye shall know them." It is a disgraceful perversion of the words of Christ. He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine. He that does but repeat the formulæ of the doctrine, were he even to compose the whole *summa theologiae* may still be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. I think then that, alike for religious and for irreligious men, it is most necessary to turn our thoughts often to what is called "mere morality." The will of God towards us is our sanctification—that is, that we should live holy lives—that is, that we should obey His law. Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place? The man who most insists on rigid practices and anathematizing creeds? No, but "he that hath clean hands and a pure heart, that hath not lifted up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour." O man, what doth the Lord require of thee? To be able to repeat correctly the innumerable propositions of dogmatic theology? To build seven altars, and offer on every altar a bullock and a ram? Nay, but to

do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God! We hear much of whole burnt offerings and sacrifices, or what in modern times correspond to them, but we see very little of loving God with all the heart and our neighbour as ourselves. And therefore it needs to be proclaimed more loudly than ever in these days, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice!" "Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs." "I spake not unto your fathers as concerning sacrifice, but this I said unto them, 'Obey my voice.'"

3. Obey my voice! Look back to Eden. What was God's revealed will to our first parents? This—that they should not eat of the forbidden fruit. Look back to Noah. What was the dispensation to him? A prohibition of bloodshed. Look back to Moses, the mighty lawgiver. Was not his whole system based on and centred in "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not"? Did not the cherubim guard with their golden wings, in the holy darkness, the tablets—alas! the shattered tablets—of his moral law? Look back to all the Prophets. Is not the one burden of them all from Samuel to the Exile, "I hate, I abhor your feast-days, but let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream"? Look back to the Apostles. Is not their most incessant lesson

that men should walk soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? Look to Him Who is the truth, and in Whom alone is no error, and when the multitudes were gathered dense around Him, and He opened His mouth and taught them, saying—what did He say? Not one word about orthodoxy, not one word about ceremonies, but, “Blessed are the meek, and the merciful, and the pure in heart.”

And yet with strange perverseness, alike in their religion as in their irreligion, men set aside, and have constantly set aside, the plainest teachings of this moral law. In theory theologians and Jesuits have often taught that men may do evil that good may come; and in practice Popes and priests have not only sanctioned despotic tyrannies, and immoral institutions, and exterminating wars—but have given licence to murder, and to trickery, and to falsehood, and have again and again adopted methods untruthful, unjust, and unscrupulous, if they did but further their party ends. The sum and substance of the moral law, as Christ set it forth, is truth and love; and the sum and substance of the religious life, as the religious world sets it forth, has very often been nothing less than pure delusion and bitter hate.

The simple fact is that only the fewest men—only the truest and purest and loftiest of the saints of God—are, in the highest sense, men of

principle. Principle is derived from a Latin word, and means properly a beginning ; it is the absolute major premiss of a practical syllogism ; an universal, exceptionless affirmation that we ought to do, or not to do, some thing or some kind of thing. And "a man of principle" is a man who is guided by this conception, not only as the main but as the sole spring of all his actions, and whom therefore you can absolutely trust. Now many men, even who call themselves religious, are not men of principle. They are Jesuitical ; they are time serving ; they are double-tongued ; they are not to be trusted. The magnet of their compass has been tampered with, has been deflected by alien influences. Truth is a part of God's eternal law ; yet there are subjects respecting which the smallest temptation will make them swerve from the truth. They will easily and frequently be surprised by fear into manslaughter upon the truth. They will suppress one whole side of the truth to serve a purpose. They believe in truth generally ; but they think it quite excusable to lie for God. Society perverts them into what it calls white lies. Self-interest will make them give a wrong return for their income-tax, or habitually use the false conventional phrase, or understate their real means that they may make an excuse for the niggardliness of their charities. Honesty again is a part of God's moral law. Yet

one man, even if he seem to be religious, will put money to uses for which it was never meant; or will raise money on trust deeds, half deceiving himself with the intention to put it back; or will plunge into the idiotic folly of betting and gambling, till his delicate honesty is gone; or will adopt dishonest professional tricks in making his fortune; or will defraud others of their just dues; or, making haste to be rich, will flood the country with lying advertisements; or will speculate on the Stock Exchange; or will foster bubble-companies, heedless of the ruin and misery which they cause. Such men may be deemed respectable men; they may even pass for religious men; but they are not men of principle: they have never learned to estimate aright the eternal grandeur of the moral law.

4. A man of principle is one of the noblest works of God. You might trust him amid poverty with untold wealth, and he would not touch it. If he has told you anything you may rely on it absolutely and totally, knowing that it is said with no subterfuges or second intentions. It may be said of such a man as of the ancient Fabricius, that it would be as easy to turn the sun from its course as to turn him from the path of duty. He is not "pale in virtue and faintly dyed in integrity;" the colours of his soul will last, for they are crimson in the grain. His faith in the moral law is absolute. He has accepted it in

the abstract, and will not pare it down by exceptions and compromises as though it were to be valued sometimes indeed, but not always ; or up to a certain point, but not beyond. He scorns the lamentable trick of reopening negotiations with the subtle spirits of moral casuistry. If he comes to the parting of two roads, and one deflects ever so little from the straight course, though that road be bright and pleasant, and the other fraught with misery and peril, yet he will keep to the straight uphill path. The fear of hostile influences will not terrify him, nor the love of popularity make him swerve. Surrounded by the world's opposition, fat bulls of Bashan encompassing him on every side, the butt of slander, subjected in all he says and does to the strongest glare of malignity—still if his Church lies, if his nation lies, if the world lies, he will tell them that they lie, and will set his back against a rock, and face them, and, if need be, perish. Yes ! because he believes that, though he may perish, truth is as “invulnerable as the sunbeam,” and no stab can kill the soul. Like John the Baptist, such a man will denounce the crimes of kings ; like Athanasius, he will withstand the faithlessness of religions ; like John Wesley, he will face the obloquy of Churches ; yea, and he will act thus though these things only seem to lead on earth to absolute and final failure. Shall we

ask the poets, who are often more of prophets than our preachers, to describe to us such a man? Here then is one :—

Who with a toward, or untoward lot,  
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not,  
P'ays, in the many games of life, that one  
Where what he most doth value must be won ;  
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,  
Nor thought of tender happiness betray.  
This is the Happy Warrior ; this is he  
That every man-at-arms should wish to be.

And here another :—

He's a slave who would not be  
In the right with two or three.  
He's a slave who would not choose  
Hatred, slander, and abuse,  
Rather than in silence shrink  
From the truth he needs must think.

And here one more :—

Take thou no thought for ought but truth and right,  
Content, if such thy fate, to die obscure ;  
Wealth palls, and honours ; fame may not endure  
And loftier souls soon weary of delight ;  
Keep innocence ; be all a true man ought ;  
Let neither pleasures tempt, nor pains appal ;  
Who hath this, he hath all things having nought,  
Who hath it not hath nothing having all.

5. Now is there any one in this congregation so ignorant as to think that such characters have nothing to do with religion? I say that this moral integrity *is* religion ; this is principle ; this *is* conduct ; this is the highest result of faith.

To live thus is to have our will in accordance with the Divine will ; it is to be crowned and mitred kings and priests over ourselves ; it is the absolute adoption of the dictates of the Divine Mind by the individual soul ; it is the result of the will swaying the reason, and love swaying the will ; it is unity with God. The man of principle has learnt the sacredness, the eternity, the awful axiomatic necessity of law. With Sophocles, he recognizes its eternity—that it had its birth neither to-day, nor yesterday, but lives for ever, and no man knoweth whence it appeared ; that it was born in the empyreal air, and the mortal race of men did not beget it, nor shall oblivion lull it into sleep. He says of law, with Hooker, that “her home is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world ;” and with Kant, that “grander even than the starry heaven above is the moral law within.” He knows further that God has consigned the guardianship of the moral law to Duty and Conscience, and into the hands of those strong angels he places his right hand and his left hand to guide him along the straight path of life. They fill his soul with the sanctity of immeasurable obligations. Offering him no delight, promising him no earthly reward, enjoining submission and demanding reverence, yet never deigning the use of force, Duty holds up before him the naked rule, before which all his inclinations are dumb,



and he uplifts his eyes to her until the countenance of this stern angel begins to wear the most benignant grace of Godhead. And Conscience enforces all the requirements to which Duty points. Conscience, the blushing spirit which mutinies within the offender's breast when he does wrong—Conscience, “the aboriginal vicar of Christ, a prophet in its information, a priest in its sanctions, a monarch in its peremptoriness.” And so highly does the true man reverence these guardians of his life, that he would face fire and torture rather than face the anguish of self-reproach which comes upon him when he has deserved their frown.

And what can any man better follow than the guidance of Law, Duty, Conscience, these cherubim of God? Have not their few simple utterances every sanction which they can possibly receive from heaven above, and from the earth beneath, and from the waters under the earth? He who lives thus, in real not in conventional obedience to the moral law, is in accordance with the whole teaching of Scripture, of which the very essence is “Keep innocency, and do the thing which is right, for that shall bring man peace at the last;” and in accordance with the whole teaching of Christ, which is, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”

Could there then be a higher outcome of the education of life than that man should learn to

give perfect unquestioning obedience to the demands of Love, Honesty, Purity, Truthfulness, thus made manifest as the will of God? But I would conclude with two most necessary cautions. The one is, Let none of you suppose for a moment that it needs no more than the appeal to reason and to honour to secure obedience to this moral law. This, as all history proves, is a fatal error. The Gospel itself is the answer to that error, for the Gospel is God's remedy for man's universal failure to keep His commandments. The necessity for the death of Christ lay in this, that all men had sinned and come short of the glory of God. You cannot get rid of revelation. You cannot replace God. Neither philosophy, nor literature, nor civilization, nor anything else can provide you with any substitute for that forgiveness which is the sole work of Christ, and that sanctification which cometh only of His spirit. Honour! Will that save you from vice and sin? Try it amid the great interests, the great passions, the great fears of life, and you will find it no better defence than a reed shaking in the wind. You might as well substitute an earthborn meteor for the sun, an earthborn cloud for the blue of heaven. For the human race in general, morality, apart from religion, is a non-reality; it is the shadow of a dream. Look at Greece, look at Rome—so civilized, so splendid in art, so

rich in intellect ; then look at the orgies of sensuality which swallowed up their glory and grandeur as in the slime pits of Gomorrah ! Look at the atheism of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, before the Reformation had begun, and then read the unanimous testimony to the abysses of its moral corruption, and the obliteration of virtue which followed the boast of its godless illuminism. Look at the wit and learning of the eighteenth century, the period of Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, in France, and see how it ended in the Carmagnole and the Guillotine, and the worship of a harlot on the polluted altars of Notre Dame. Nay, look at France in this day. When she emerged from the burning fiery furnace of the Franco-German War, after the catastrophe of Sedan and the conflagration of Paris, men like Renan and Alexandre Dumas fils proclaimed in clear tones that her collapse was due to the moral failure bred of atheism. But now once more we have heard her statesmen ridicule in their speeches the very existence of a God ; we have seen the name of God expelled from her schools and erased from her statute book ; and with what results ? A society honeycombed with vice ; a literature reeking with impurity ; a nation which alone in all Europe is stationary in numbers ! And in one of his very latest writings we find the high priest of her culture, the consummate

master of her style, the foremost of her scholars, he who wrote the "*Vie de Jésus*," openly arguing such detestable and nation-destroying theses as that Nature is indifferent to chastity, that drunkenness is possibly commendable, and that frivolous persons are perhaps in the right. Ay so! When the God of Sinai is forgotten it is never long before men begin to dance before the gilded calf, and to proclaim, "These be thy Gods, O Israel, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

6. There are many youths among my hearers, and to each and all of them I say that they cannot see the face of God unless they keep their bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity; and they cannot keep their bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity save by striving ever for fellowship with God in Christ. It is not the grandeur of the moral law alone which can help you, unless through the cloud and flame of Sinai you can see the face of Christ. Only when you do this can you utter with Joseph, when faced with sudden temptation, the eternal protest of innocence and faithful youth. Beware of saying that you have not made up your mind. He who has not made up his mind to be on the side of purity and righteousness, has made up his mind to be on the side of vice and sin. Once, in 1750, 25,000 French soldiers were encamped at Klösterkamp,

and a young officer, the Chevalier d'Assis, advanced alone into a wood to reconnoitre. He was instantly surrounded by an ambush of the enemy, and, while the bayonets pricked his breast, a stern voice whispered in his ear, "Make but the least noise, and you are a dead man." Without one second's hesitation the young man shouted at the top of his voice, "A moi, Auvergne! The enemy are here!" Instantly he fell, pierced with a score of bayonet-points. He fell, but the French army was saved from the surprise. You see that, with that brave youth, military duty had become a habit and an instinct, to be instantly obeyed even on pain of death. And so, if you would be safe, must it be with you. With you too, as soldiers of Christ, the love of God must be an unerring light. Before it is too late faith must pass into purpose, and purpose into a dogged determined resolution. In God's army there can be no neutrals; in the borders of God's kingdom there are no debatable grounds. Lands of which the ownership is in the least uncertain belong to the Evil One. He that allows himself to dally with any vice does nothing in reality but entertain an evil demon. This is what Elijah meant, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow Him." This is what St. Paul meant, when he asked, "What fellowship hath right-

eousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" This is what Christ meant, "No man can serve two masters." It is only when a man seeks God, and loves Him with all his heart, and strives consciously and earnestly to walk in the steps of his Saviour Christ—it is then only that he really begins to apprehend the full grandeur of the moral law—then only that he becomes "a perfect man, and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil."

## IX.

### The Possibility of Goodness and the Example of the Saints.

“Called to be saints.”—I Cor. i. 2.



SINCE the seventh century one day of the year has been dedicated to the memory of All Saints, and in many religious communities, since the tenth century, another day is set apart for the commemoration of All Souls. This latter day has been dropped from our calendar only because it was mixed up with Romish views about purgatory and masses for the dead. Otherwise a day devoted to meditation on *All Souls*—in the strictest sense of the word—in connection with a day of All Saints, suggests thoughts as solemn, and, I trust, as profitable as almost any which could be presented to human contemplation.

I. The great procession of mankind in its unnumbered millions is ever sweeping across the narrow stage of life, issuing from a darkness in which they are not, passing into a darkness in

which they are no more seen. We watch that procession as it winds through the long centuries of history, and we note its most striking figures. Some are Kings, who built pyramids and subdued nations, and held absolute sway over the destinies of their fellow-men ; some are Poets "with their garlands and singing robes about them ;" some are great Discoverers, who enlarged the powers of man over the forces of Nature ; some are great Philosophers, who widened the limits of human thought. Here, at the central spot of the life of a great people, we are surrounded on all sides by the tombs and cenotaphs of such famous men as these ; but it is not of such as these that the great procession is mainly composed. The vast masses of it, like the vast masses here gathered to-day, consist of a nameless throng—the poor, the ordinary, the average, the undistinguished ; men whose little lives gleamed for a moment out of the eternities and disappeared ; men who lie in earth's millions of nameless graves—the meaning, and even the bare fact of their existence as much obliterated from all human memory and from every human record as though it had been a speck of foam on the immeasurable sea.

To our eyes mankind is mainly divided into the eminent and the obscure ; the known and the unknown ; the great and the small ; the rulers and the ruled ; the learned and the igno-



rant ; and it is to the latter classes—those whom the world call the unimportant, the insignificant—that the great multitude of every generation have always belonged. Savage and civilized, in every age, in every region, the immense majority of men—“some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone”—have vanished like a bubble, have “sunk as lead in the mighty waters.” After a year or two they are forgotten in the grave for evermore. “There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest ; there the prisoners are at ease, they hear not the driver’s voice. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master.”

2. But to the eye of God—to the eyes it may be of all good and evil spirits—the aspect of that procession is very different. To them the inch-high differences of human rank have no existence. For them the thistles of human loftiness have no elevation, and the mole-hills cast no shadow. They, as they gaze on this marvellous procession of human life, know only the difference between the good and the evil ; between those who fear God and those who reject Him ; between those who love and those who only hate and injure their neighbours ; between the holy and the unholy ; the forgiven and the impenitent ; the saved and the unsaved souls.

3. In the fine gradations of human character

and the complex motives of human action, it is only in certain marked instances that we can make any such broad distinctions. We can see that some men have dared to be eminently good, and that other men have been conspicuously and infamously bad. But most men's lives and characters wear in our eyes a very mixed aspect. They show interchanging elements of good and evil, which run together like warp and woof in the varying web. We see human sin and weakness even in the good; we see here and there a gleam of saintliness even in the unsaintly. Only the balances of God are perfect. He alone, putting the just weights in the even scales, can pronounce on the whole life of most men that they "did that which was good," or "did that which was evil," in the sight of the Lord. But though we can never pronounce judgment on the future of any man, we cannot help seeing that many have been, according to all human estimate, bad men and bad women, and that some few have been the saints of God.

4. Bad men and bad women—we think of them with pain and shrinking sorrow; we think that for mankind, at any rate, it had been better if they had never been. All those who have lived only to gratify the mean and sensual egotism of a hungry, shivering self; all those whose lifelong example has deepened man's

feverish thirst for gold ; all those who have heaped up for themselves riches as for a day of slaughter by oppression, robbery, or wrong ; all who by the unlawful indulgence of their lowest passions have contributed to poison the life-blood of mankind ; all whose words or writings have infected the stream of life with the leprous distilment of polluted thoughts ; all those who by the shameful perversion of art and literature have corrupted and inflamed the disease of morbid imaginations ; all who have helped to degrade life from its sweet and serious sanctity into vulgarism and frivolity ; all who have been the greedy and cruel disseminators of gossip, slander, and lies ; all whose example has rendered the actions of men viler, and their thoughts more trivial ; all who have striven to hand on and to perpetuate evil traditions ; all who have flourished by the causes of human misery and ruin ; all who have delighted to hate, envy, revile, or depreciate their fellow-men ; all the idle cumberers of the ground whose root has been as rottenness and their blossom gone up as dust ; all whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things—the world may give them fortunes, or coronets, or loud applause, but these are bad men and bad women. And if all mankind had been as these have been and are ; if there had been no salt of the earth amid its corruption, no twinkling

stars amid its midnight ; if, like the seething of the grape-bundles in the uncleansed wine-vat, earth had been nothing but a ferment of man's vileness, vanity, and lust ; if there had been none on earth but those four classes whom God most hates—mockers, liars, hypocrites, and slanderers—then, indeed, earth had been an anticipated hell. “ Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

5. But, oh, with what unspeakable relief do we turn from these works of darkness, and them who delight therein, to the saints of God ! In them is the healing of the world.

Do not think of the mere title “saints.” That is at the best an imperfect and precarious title. It has been given to some, at least, of the unworthy, and denied to many of the worthy. On All Souls' Day we may think not only of all whom the Church has called “saints,” but also of the long line of the heroes of faith in olden times ; of the patriarchs—Enoch the blameless, Noah the faithful, Abraham the friend of God ; of the sweet and meditative Isaac, the afflicted and wrestling Jacob. We may think of Moses, the meekest of men ; of brave Judges ; of glorious Prophets ; of patriot Warriors ; of toiling Apostles ; of the many Martyrs who would die rather than lie. We may think of the Hermits who, from the guilt and turmoil of life, fled into the soli-

tude of the wilderness ; of the Missionaries—St. Paul, St. Columban, St. Benedict, St. Boniface, St. Francis Xavier, Schwartz, Eliot, Henry Martyn, Coleridge Patteson ; of Reformers who cleared the world of lies like Savonarola, Huss, Luther, Zwingli, Wesley, Whitfield ; of wise rulers like Alfred, and St. Louis, and Washington, and Lincoln ; of the writers of holy books like Thomas à Kempis, and Baxter, and Bunyan, and Jeremy Taylor ; of the slayers of monstrous abuses like Howard and Wilberforce ; of good bishops like Hugo of Avalon, and Fénelon, and Berkeley ; of good pastors like Oberlin and Fletcher of Madeley, and Adolphe Monod, and Felix Neff ; of all true poets, whether sweet and holy like George Herbert, and Cowper, and Keble, and Longfellow, or grand and mighty like Dante and Milton. These are but a few of the many names of those who have reflected the glory of their Master, Christ ; and who walk with Him in white robes, for they are worthy. My brethren, if you would comfort your hearts, if you would strengthen your good resolutions, if you would retain that high estimate of human nature which so often threatens to succumb when we look at the sickening exhibitions of moral revolt and disorder on every side of us, most earnestly would I urge you in an age like this to make yourselves acquainted with Christian history and Christian biography, as an antidote

to the degeneracy of these worldly and evil days. From earth's mire and darkness lift up your eyes to this starry path of great examples. When evil, and baseness, and triviality are being thrust upon us on all sides; when men take it for a sign of genius to sneer and to depreciate—amid all this fuss, and chatter, and hurry—amid reams of frivolous fiction, humiliating chatter, and unprofitable controversy, have we no time to think of things eternal?—have we no desire to possess our souls in peace and nobleness?—have we no need of something to keep alive our faith in the dignity of man?

6. I, for one, find that ennobling element of thought in dwelling on the life and sufferings of Christ, and next in considering the blessed example of those who have followed Him bearing each his own cross. Let me point out two of the many ways in which it seems to me that this contemplation of these, our worthier and nobler brothers in the great family of Christ, may be most blessed and useful to us.

(i.) In laying down the laws of observation, the great philosopher of the *Novum Organum* describes what he calls "the prerogative of instances," and among them he speaks of instances which he calls *ostensivæ* or *elucescentes*, instances which show any quality in its purest exaltation, in its fullest vigour. Now the saints of God furnish us with just such *instantiæ elu-*

*cescentes* of pure and possible human goodness. They show us how, through faith in Christ, and by the Spirit of Christ, and because of prayer to God through Christ, men weak as we are, tempted as we are, yet did gloriously and conspicuously triumph over sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and thereby proved to us that we can do the same. They refute the excuse of our feebleness; they cut away the lie of our inability.

(ii.) It needs, for instance, but a short experience of life to see that the mass of men are greedy and selfish. Self is the all but universal idol—is for millions the sole law of existence. Men jostle each other, and struggle in the press and trample savagely on fallen rivals, and show the brutal spectacle of that perverted life which lives and dies only for itself. And yet it is possible for men to become—and thousands of men have become—perfectly, beautifully unselfish, caring honestly for the happiness of others more than for their own. St. Macarius the hermit lived in the desert in a little community of solitaries. One day there was brought to him that which in the hot desert is the most tempting and exquisite of all luxuries, a bunch of fresh purple grapes with the bloom and mist of their delicious ripeness upon them. Macarius hated the thought of taking them himself; he preferred that another should enjoy the boon, and handed

it to one of the brothers ; but the same motive was strong in him, and he gave it to another. But, again, this other preferred the enjoyment of a companion to his own ; and so, in the absolute unselfishness of that little community, the untouched, tempting grapes were handed from one to another, none wishing to keep what would be pleasant to his fellow, till at last they were handed back to Macarius again. Unselfishness, you see, had become as completely the law of that little brotherhood as selfishness is the law of the common world. Oh, how infinitely lovelier is the spectacle presented by these saints of God and their love for one another, and their wish that others should be blessed, than is daily presented in this hard, mean, modern world !

(iii.) Again, we need not look far to see the Pride of men. It is so common that it seems to be as strong in the poorest and meanest as in the great. We see it, and its weak satellites, conceit and vanity, in the look of men ; it is shown in their gait ; we hear it in their very accents. And never was the tendency stronger than now to be self-assertive ; to be vain ; to say to every one else, "I am just as good as you ;" to resent with fierce bitterness the notion that "They call this man as good as me." Pride is the one Protean spirit, which takes many forms in envy, hatred, backbiting, spurious



liberty, false independence. And yet it is quite possible even for man, proud man, to become resigned, humble, submissive, meek; not to seek great things for himself; to take the lowest place; to think others better than himself. St. Thomas of Aquino was by far the greatest man of his age, of noble birth, of ancient lineage, of fine appearance, the most consummate theologian, supreme in learning and goodness, the friend of Popes and Kings. In position he was but a humble monk. One day at Bologna, a stranger arriving asked the Prior for some one to help him to get provisions and carry his basket. "Tell the first brother you meet," said the Prior. St. Thomas was walking in meditation in the cloister, and, not knowing him, the stranger said, "Your Prior bids you to follow me." Without a word the great teacher—the Angel of the Schools, as he was called by the affection of his admirers—bowed his head, took the basket, and followed. But he was suffering from lameness, and since he was unable to keep up, the stranger rated him soundly as a lazy, good-for-nothing fellow, who ought to show more zeal in religious obedience. The saint meekly bore the unjust reproaches, and answered never a word. "Do you know whom you are speaking to and treating in this rude way?" said the indignant citizens who witnessed the scene. "That is Brother Thomas of Aquino." "Brother Thomas of Aquino!" said

the stranger in amazement; and immediately throwing himself on his knees, he begged to be forgiven. "Nay," said St. Thomas, "it is I who should ask forgiveness, since I have not been so active as I should have been." And this humility, so rare in little men, was the chief characteristic of this truly great man. Once, when reading aloud in his monastery, the Prior thought that he had made a false quantity, and corrected him; he instantly altered the word. "Why did you not tell him that you were right?" asked the monks afterwards. "The quantity of the word was of no consequence," he answered "but it was of consequence that I should be obedient." Once again when he was addressing a vast congregation in one of the chief churches of Paris, an insolent intruder beckoned to him to stop, and aimed at him an abusive harangue. The saint waited till he had ended, and then, without one word of anger or resentment, calmly continued his discourse. From that disciplined and noble heart all pride had been expelled. "Give me, O Lord," such was his daily prayer—"Give me, O Lord, a noble heart which no earthly affection can drag down!"

7. I might give other instances no less decisive of the attainment of other virtues by weak mortal men. I might show, for instance, how the saints of God have attained a perfect purity, or a perfect contempt for all worldly ends; but

let me rather point a second great lesson. If it be an infinitely better and greater thing to be a Christian than to be a King; if the poorest Lazarus who ever lay at a rich man's gate may be nobler and happier than the most gorgeous Dives, then how far higher must it be than every human distinction to be a saint of God! Yet, if every other avenue be closed to us, this highest of all ambitions is open to the humblest of us all. And what a true end and aim in life is this! If at any time we be inclined to despair amid the waves of misfortune and the malice of our fellow-men; if weary of injustice and discouragement we sometimes feel almost driven to say with Elijah, "And now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers!" is there no comfort in the thought that God is not unjust and contemptuous like man? Our earthly misery or lowliness; the poverty of our intellectual gifts; our failing efforts; our waning powers; our many feeblenesses and imperfections, so they be not stained with wilful sin, do not make us any lower in the sight of God. In spite of all such things, we may have attained by His grace the highest and best that life has to offer. Even the Church has given her title of "saint," not only to great Popes like St. Leo or St. Gregory, and Kings like the Confessor and St. Louis, but to some of the very humblest of the low. Can you imagine a lowlier lot than

that of a servant-of-all-work? Yet such, and no more, was Santa Zita. At the age of twelve she left her little mountain village to become a servant to a family in Lucca, and in that poor service she continued till, at the age of sixty, she died. Often reviled, often beaten, often forced to hard menial duties, without one murmur she served in singleness of heart, and out of her poverty she fed the hungry and clothed the naked with a garment. And yet even in such a lot men saw her happiness, and her sainthood; and thirty years after her death Dante, the greatest of poets, speaks of a burgher of Zita's proud and warlike city of Lucca simply as "one of Santa Zita's elders." The warriors, the bishops, the nobles are designated only as fellow-citizens with the servant-of-all-work. What more would we have, my brethren, if even through so deep a valley of humiliation there still lies the path to heaven? Let us set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for, you see, a life spent in brushing clothes, and washing crockery, and sweeping floors—a life which the proud of earth would have treated as the dust under their feet; a life spent at the clerk's desk; a life spent in the narrow shop; a life spent in the labourer's hut, may yet be a life so ennobled by God's loving mercy that for the sake of it a King might gladly yield his crown.

8. And, in conclusion, thank God there have been and are in the earth tens of thousands holy and faithful, and therefore essentially happy and full of inward peace, like that poor servant-girl. "After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, arrayed with white robes and palms in their hands." Oh! when in a moment you hear those words, set to the mighty music of the anthem, will you not think of their solemn and glorious meaning?

Will you be of that great innumerable multitude of the redeemed? Amid the great procession of humanity will you make up your minds that you will be poor or rich, low or high, successful or unsuccessful, belauded or reviled as God shall please; but that you will not be of the bad men and bad women, who by mean passions, and vile lusts, and bitter hatred, and lying words have made the world worse, and all life darker for their fellowship? If not now, when? Ah! seek even now the grace of God's Holy Spirit, that you may leave the baseness of the malicious, the greed of the worldly, the shame of the unclean, and be blessed for evermore!

## X.

### The Bible.

“Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable.”

2 TIM. iii. 16.



HOSE to whom it is my duty to speak about sacred things know my constant desire to illustrate the truths of God from every aspect of the life and work of men. The fact that I do so is not accidental. It is my fundamental conviction that God, revealing Himself in many parts and in many ways, desires that we should not *confine* our thoughts to any one of those fragments or sources of His teaching. His wisdom is a *πολυποίκιλος σοφία*—a richly diversified wisdom. It makes a vast difference whether we regard God as a Being infinitely distant from us, as a Being who has spoken to us once in Scripture and speaks no more, or whether we think of Him as speaking to us always and in many voices. He has made of one all nations, that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from each one of us ;

as certain even of the heathen poets said, "For we are also His offspring."

I. My purpose, then, is to speak to you at different times of some of the great diverse sources of revelation; to treat of the Bible, and of Nature, and of Poetry, and of Art, and of History, and of Experience, and of the Conscience, as the eternal teachers of mankind, and thus to show from how many sources we may learn God's will, and how unanimous as well as how solemn are the lessons which they set forth. For inspiration is a continuous energy of the present, not a mere exhausted and isolated spasm of the past. Pentecost was not a single outpouring. There are many Pentecosts. The Holy Ghost was not given once, or once only. He is constantly descending into all holy hearts. Our God is no sun that once shone and now has set; no, but He is always in the meridian. He is

No ebbing tide that left  
Strewn with dead miracles those eldest shores  
For men to dry, and dryly lecture on,  
Himself henceforth *incapable* of flood.

No; but our God is a living God, and our Christ a living Christ, and the Holy Spirit is with us. Yea, except we be reprobates, He is *in* us now and for evermore.

I place the Bible first because it must ever continue to be of the supremest importance to

the race of man. It contains the record of God's special revelations to one chosen people, and of that final, all-inclusive revelation wherein He hath spoken to us by His Son. The Bible is not by any means His *only* revelation, but it contains the words spoken by Him who was the Word of Life, and also the clearest, directest lessons which He has ever spoken to man through the mind and utterance of his brother man. Take but one illustration of its unique supremacy. After all these thousands of years of the world's existence, after all the splendours of literature in all nations and in all ages, there is no book in the whole world which can supersede it as an instrument for the education of the young. After all these millenniums it remains the most uniquely glorious book in all the world. Alone of all books it is circulated in hundreds of millions of copies in every tongue. "Its eclipse would be the return of chaos, its extinction the epitaph of history." "Its light is like the body of heaven in its clearness, its vastness like the bosom of the sea, its variety like scenes of nature." The testimony on this subject, of a man like Professor Huxley, a leader of modern science, will not be suspected. "I have been seriously perplexed to know," he says, "how the religious feeling which is the essential base of conduct can be kept up without the use of the Bible. The pagan moralists lack life and colour,



and even the noble Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, is too high and refined for an ordinary child. For three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history. It forbids the veriest hind, who never left his village, to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the farthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary interspace in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time according to its efforts to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning the payment for their work?"

2. Unhappily, however, in age after age, the Bible has been liable to such boundless misinterpretations that it is not possible or honourable to speak of it as the most blessed among the teachers of mankind without admitting, as St. Peter did eighteen hundred years ago, that it is liable to terrible abuse. Century after century men, misled by their religious teachers, have failed to see what the Bible is. They have made a fetish of it, and under plea of its sacredness have taken advantage of its many-sidedness to get rid of its most essential teaching. They have made it like the *fainéant* monarchs, who

were surrounded with splendid state and almost divine reverence, while care was taken that their real voice should be never heard and their real wishes never known. It would require volumes to tell how the Bible has been wounded in the house of its friends; how men have set up claims for it which it never makes for itself; how false the principles on which it has been judged; how gross the arbitrariness with which it has been misinterpreted; how insolent the usurpation with which it has been monopolized; how it has been loaded with preposterous glosses and locked up in alien tongues. Popes tried to keep it for their exclusive interpretation. The English priesthood made it crime to possess, and death to read, the English version of Wycliff. Bishop Tunstall, of Durham, bought up and burnt the copies of Tyndale's version. Thousands were slain and tortured for trying to learn from it in the Albigensian crusades, and thousands more in the dark days of Alva and Philip. Men have used it as an excuse to hate, to curse, to burn, to hunt down each other. They have torn it into shreds, and turned each shred into the fluttering ignoble rag of some party pennon. They have dislocated its phrases and built false theologies on the perversion of its texts. Even in the second century St. Irenaeus compared the reasonings drawn from the Bible to ropes of sand, and the

systems framed from it to mosaics of a dog or fox made by breaking up the fragments of the mosaic of a king. Starting from the false assumption that the Bible was verbally dictated and homogeneously supernatural, men have used this or that narrative, this or that sentence of it, to found systems utterly alien from its general purport, and to defend atrocities entirely abhorrent to the noblest spirit which it inculcates. Through the narrow wicket of a text they have let in the crimes and tyrannies which were meant to be excluded by every wall and buttress of its general structure. There is scarcely one single form of theological heresy, or of political outrage, or of social wrong, which has not pleaded Scripture in its defence. Christ denounced with burning indignation the whole system of Pharisaism, yet Pharisaism pretended to base itself on texts. The immense usurpations of the mediæval papacy were built, like an inverted pyramid, on the needlepoint of one perverted text. The odious ruthlessness of Calvinism, which turned God into Moloch and man into mere fuel for endless flames, proclaimed itself as the only logical inference from Scripture texts. The slaveholder defended by texts his hateful interests; the Mormon defends by texts his detestable polygamy; the English clergy defended by texts their slavish tenet of passive obedience; the Romish priests defended

by texts alike the despotism of one tyrant and the dagger-thrust of the assassin by which another fell. Nor were the Puritans any wiser. Preaching before Parliament in 1646, I believe in St. Margaret's Church, Stephen Marshall said, "He is a cursed man that withholds his hand from the shedding of blood, or who shall do as Saul did, slay some and save some," instead of slaying all. The Inquisition lit its fires, and turned its racks, and plied its thumb-screws on the authority of texts. Texts have been used to crush freedom in her cradle, and to strangle science at her birth. Because the Scriptures are a most precious gift of God, the devil has taken special pains to turn them into a most potent instrument of evil. Disguising himself as an angel of light, he has persuaded men to make Scripture an idol. Now God will have no idols, not even if they be sacred things. Our greatest poet has told us that "The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose." And all this horrible abuse of God's precious gift has sprung from the false dogma that inspiration supersedes the ordinary limitations of human imperfection, and that every word and letter of Scripture is supernaturally dictated by God. It is time, it is high time, it is of infinite importance to the whole future of Christianity—it will be but a tardy reparation to the insulted majesty of truth—that this lying for God, this

degrading and ruinous idolatry of the letter, should be for ever swept aside. The errors which have been built upon it, the cruelties which have been perpetrated in its name, are a record which, more than any other, angels—

Blush to record, and weep to give it in.

3. And as these false views of an unscriptural bibliolatry must be repudiated, so must plain facts of a divine history be constantly borne in mind. (i.) One is that the Bible is not a single book, but, as Edmund Burke said, “an infinite variety of the most venerable and most multifarious literature.” It is not one book, but sixty-six books, of which some are separated from others by a space of fifteen hundred years. It is not one homogeneous utterance, but a series of fragmentary and manifold utterances, by writers of very different degrees of goodness and enlightenment. Some of it is History written at unknown epochs by unknown writers. Some of it is Poetry, varying from the wailing cry of the penitent to the triumphant war-song and the glowing epithalamium. Some of it enshrines the shrewd experiences of mundane wisdom and the eager speculations of dawning philosophy. Some of it is Prophecy—that is, for the most part, impassioned moral preaching, the denunciation of national sins, the threat of doom to guilty cities, and above all, the ever-brightening

promise of the great deliverance and the Great Deliverer to come. These are the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. And then, after an interspace of four hundred silent years, you have the twenty-seven books of the New Testament—viz., four Gospels, one narrative, twenty-one letters, and one Apocalypse, the writings of Apostles and Evangelists, which are the final and essential part of revelation, because they record for ever the words and work of our Saviour Christ, and of those whom He sent forth to be His witnesses to all mankind.

(ii.) And this naturally involves the second fact that the Bible is by no means all upon the same level of moral and spiritual value. The morality of the Old Testament is not only elevated by, but in many respects corrected and superseded by, the morality of the New. The Elijah spirit is not the Christ spirit. Some things were permitted by Moses, not because they were either divine, or perfect, or good, or in themselves right, but because the Jews were stiffnecked and immature. They consisted of statutes which of themselves were not good and judgments by which they should not live. The New Testament is to the Old as sunlight to moonlight, as substance to shadow, as that which is eternal to that which waxeth old and passeth away.

4. It is the neglect of this last truth that has

been a main source of peril and mischief. Let one instance suffice. When René, Duchess of Ferrara, daughter of Louis XII., wrote to Calvin that we were not to follow David's example in hating our enemies, Calvin curtly and peremptorily wrote back to her that such a gloss would upset the whole Bible;—just as if Christ had never said the very contrary! Herein the great Reformer showed himself more ignorant than the humble minister in "Old Mortality." "By what law can you justify the atrocity you would commit?" asks Henry Morton of Balfour of Burley. "If thou art ignorant of it," replied Burley, "thy companion is well aware of the law which gave the men of Jericho to the sword of Joshua, the son of Nun." "But we," answered the divine, "live under a better dispensation, which instructeth us to return good for evil, and to pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us."

5. The roots and fibres of errors like those on which I have touched are so intertangled in the network of modern religionism, with a thousand other forms of the misuse of Scripture, and with deep ignorance respecting its real nature, that these warnings have become most necessary. The Infidel and the Secularist find their chief allies in the bigoted blindness in which, even in this nineteenth century, the timidity of religious teachers suffers the mass of Christians to remain.

Nay, our modern sceptics are themselves led into terrible perplexity by their own ignorance of what all the most competent teachers really hold. Suffice it now to say that the essential Bible to us is not everything which we find in the four corners of the sixty-six books which we bind up in one volume and call the Bible, but it is the message of God to ourselves, which every heart and conscience may find in the whole tenor of its truest and noblest teachings. The Word of God contained in Scripture becomes self-luminous when it has been once illuminated by the teaching of Christ Himself. Young men, when the Infidel makes merry over this or that story, or impugns this or that sentiment of the Old Testament, if you do not know what is the proper and easy answer to give him, tell him so; but tell him at the same time that you will consult those who do. And meanwhile you may most safely assure him that by such criticisms he is no more shaking the foundation of Christianity or diminishing the awful verity of religion than he would be shaking Westminster Abbey if he took out a loosened stone from one of its pinnacles, or pointed to an outworn epitaph upon its floor.

6. But, having eliminated these mistaken views we may dwell without stint on the priceless value of Scripture as a whole, of Scripture in its best and final teaching, to the heart of man. It con-



tains in germ nine-tenths of all that is best and noblest in the literature of two millenniums of Christianity. Warriors have fought for it, and martyrs bled. The Talmud and the Koran, nay, even the Books of the Buddhists have but stolen its brightest gems. It exercised the toil of Origen and Jerome, and fired the eloquence of Chrysostom and Augustine. It dilated the supreme and immortal songs of Dante and of Milton. It woke the intrepid genius of Luther, and the burning zeal of Whitefield, and the hallowed fancy of Bunyan. It inspired the pictures of Fra Angelico and Raphael, and the music of Handel and Mozart. "There is scarcely any noble part of knowledge," says Hooker, "worthy of the mind of man but from Scripture it may have some direction and light." The hundred best books, the hundred best pictures, the hundred best pieces of music are all in it. "The literature of Greece," says Theodore Parker, "which goes up like incense from that land of temples, has not half the influence of this book of a despised nation. The sun never sets upon its gleaming page." "What a book!" exclaimed the sceptic Heine, after a day spent in the unwonted task of reading it. "Vast and wide as the world, rooted in the abysses of creation, and towering up beyond the blue secrets of heaven! Sunrise and sunset, promise and fulfilment, birth and death, the whole drama of humanity, all

are in this book." "In this book," said Ewald, picking up a New Testament which had fallen to the ground when Dean Stanley visited him "is all the wisdom of the world."

7. Or test it by the immeasurable comfort and blessing which it, and it alone, has brought, and evermore can bring, to men. Millions have loved it passionately who have cared for no other literature, and it has led them through life as with an archangel's hand. "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Augustine, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, St. Bernard, Luther, Melancthon, Columbus, Francis Xavier—and I wonder how many thousands more—have died with those words upon their lips! "That book, sir," said Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, pointing to the Bible, when he lay on his death-bed, "that book is the rock on which our Republic rests."

"I have only one book now," said the poet Collins, "but that is the best." "Bring me the book," said Sir Walter Scott to Lockhart on his death-bed. "What book?" asked Lockhart. "*The Book—the Bible*," said Sir Walter, "there is only one." Every shallow and ignorant Free-thinker fancies that he can demolish the Bible. He might as well try to demolish the Himalayas. The greatest men have esteemed it most.

Infidels try to deride the Bible because (they say) it contradicts science. Now I have quoted

the testimony of the most eminent living man of science, and I will quote one of the illustrious dead. Once when Faraday was ill his arm was resting on a table upon which lay an open book. "I fear you are worse," said Dr. Latham. "It is not that," said Faraday with a sob, "but why will people go astray when they have this blessed book to guide them!"

And its words speak to the ear and to the heart as no other music will, even after wild and sinful lives. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod, and Thy staff, they comfort me;" those words were repeated by his physician to Daniel Webster on his death-bed; and the great man faltered out, "That is what I want; Thy rod—Thy rod, Thy staff—Thy staff." They were the last words he spoke.

8. I would then urge you all to a constant and reverent—but at the same time a wise and spiritual—study of this sacred book. "If we be ignorant," say the translators of 1611, "the Scriptures will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us. *Tolle lege; Tolle lege.*" But the Bible is not a charm or an amulet, that it should do this of itself. The blessings which it can bestow depend on yourselves and on the grace of God which you seek

in prayer. Read as a scoffer, read as a Pharisee, and it will be useless to you. Read it rightly, and it will indeed be a light unto your feet and a lamp unto your path. Read it teachably, read it devotionally. The knowledge of Scripture "is a science not of the intellect, but of the heart." Read it above all as Christ taught us to read it: not by entangling yourselves in the controversial and the dubious, but by going to the very heart of its central significance. Have you no Reason to guide you, no Conscience lighted by 'God and lighting to God?' Have you no Spirit of Christ to teach you that you must read its lessons—not conceitedly, not with self-satisfaction, not through the lurid mists of some anathematising theology, not with the blind and furious eyes of party suspicion or factious hate—but into "the soul's vernacular" and with the eyes of love? Treat it as a heap of missiles to be hurled at your neighbour and his opinions, and there will be no end to your follies and errors. You will but distort it, as so many have done, to your own perdition. Read it in humility and in love, and then no Urim which the High-priest wore has ever gleamed with such lessons as it will reveal to you. However much it be mingled with mysteries which we are not required to unravel, and difficulties which we are not able to solve, "it contains plain teaching for men of every rank of soul and state

in life, which, so far as they honestly and implicitly obey, they will be happy and innocent to the utmost powers of their nature, and capable of victory over all adversities, whether of temptation or of pain."\*

\* This Sermon is of course only a fragment. It was only meant to clear the way for many others on separate books of Holy Writ.

## XI.

### Temptation.

“Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

MATT. xxvi. 41.



WE spoke, last Sunday, of principle ; the sanctity of it ; its foundation in the moral law ; the rarity of men of principle in the highest sense even among religious men. Now surely, to any who think at all, it should be the most tremendous problem of our life that God has revealed His will, and that man lives in all but universal disobedience to that will. None of us can pretend that it is for lack of plain teaching. It is not possible even to conceive how God could have made more clear to us than He has done that the eternal laws of right-living are Worship, Obedience, Love, Honesty, Purity, Truth, Contentment. He teaches us by every one of His Bibles that such is His will. He so teaches us in Scripture, from the first page of Genesis—“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”—to the last of Revelation—“Without are dogs, and sorcerers,

and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." He teaches us in Nature. Nature says: "I make no exceptions. I admit no compromises. I know forgiveness of sins. If my word is disobeyed, my blow falls." He teaches us by Experience. Experience points, with her lean and palsied finger, to the earth wrinkled with the graves of the innumerable dead who have never lived. He teaches us by the Living Voice of Christ. Christ says, quite unmistakably, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Nay, even the enemy of souls himself bears witness to the sanctity of moral laws. When men would fain cast the blame of their vileness on him, he says "Ask your own consciences honestly whether I have ever deceived you; whether I have ever tried to make you believe that a bad action was a good one. It is you who uphold the kingdom of darkness, which else would tumble down. The sin and the vice are your own choice. You give life to them, and they are your death. I do not deceive. I tempt."

1. But yet, though God has written His will in sunbeams and in flame, has uttered it in thunder and in music, we have the awful fact, that sin is universal. Some men are indeed incomparably viler, and more villanous than others, but all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. As race after race passes

across the stage of history, we see their favourite sins, whether of avarice, or lust, or blood. As man after man makes his brief passage between the two eternities, we see the traces, or read the story of his vices or failings. Men differ, as I have said, in all degrees : some sin habitually ; others fall but rarely, and only under sudden overwhelming temptation. Some sin continuously from the cradle to the grave, and repent not ; others have sinned indeed, but they are washed, but they are justified, but they are sanctified. I do not need to prove this. It is enough to appeal to your own consciences, to your own experience. Look back over the faultful past of your life—back to the days of your happy childhood. Remember your first conscious act of sin ; the first time you took sin consciously by the hand ; think how infinitely better it had been for you had you gained that battle. Trace all the consequences of that first time that you did violence to the majesty of God's Law ; of that beginning of sin which is as the letting out of water, and of which the stream so rapidly became, first ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then to the waist, then waters to swim in, waters that could not be passed over. Think of all that, at this moment, you might have been ; of all that you are not ; of all that you are. How was it that you individually dashed yourself against that wall of adamant ?



How was it that you, too, braved that eternal inexorable penalty? Yes! You have more or less met the awful problem in your own life—have you never seen it working in the lives of others? Some of you are parents. Has no father here watched, with aching heart, the departure of his prodigal into the far country, or seen him sitting in rags among the swine? Has no woman here had to echo the passionate cry of Lemuel's mother "What my son? and what the son of my womb? and what the son of my vows?" You trained them well—have none of them proved false to the guide of their youth and the covenant of their God? The sons of the sweet Psalmist of Israel were Amnon and Absalom. The sons of Eli were Hophni and Phinehas. Well, how is all this? What is the explanation of the tremendous problem—that God's will is holiness and man's life is sin?

2. The whole explanation lies in one word of mystery; in one word of terrible omen for the human race—Temptation. Temptation indeed is not sin. We all must be tempted; but not one of us need yield to temptation. Life is of its very nature and necessity a moral warfare. To shirk it is impossible. It is a vain resistance to God's will to try to fence any soul from ever incurring it. Sooner or later, whether we are prepared or unprepared, "the tempting, opportunity meets the susceptible disposition,

and no child of man wholly escapes the fatal influence. One only who wore earth about Him has been tempted like as we are, yet without sin—One only—the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The mystery we cannot explain; but the history, whether veiled in allegory or not, we know. Scripture gives it us in a few verses. The man and the woman were placed in Eden—happy, innocent, with but one prohibition—as clear as God's utterance could make it, as fenced about with warning menace as their nature could understand. How then came they to fall? It is the old, old, thousandfold-multiplied experience. Eve lingers near the place of temptation; then comes the thought of doing wrong, the cherished imagination of the forbidden fruit; then the "I would, but dare not;" then the "I wish it were not wrong;" then the fatal doubt—"Yea, hath God said?" is it after all wrong? then the rash tumultuous act; then its repetition; then the fatal persistence; then the tempting of others; then the inevitable consequences—the death physical moral, spiritual; the shame of lost virtue; the agony of penal results; the driving forth from Eden; the fair life whose root has become as rottenness, and whose blossom has gone up as dust. In one form or other, to a great extent or to a small extent, having long ago repented, or having not repented but only suffered from

remorse and fear—we have all gone through it; all disobeyed the will of God; all fallen from perfect obedience. The sentence of death has passed upon us; and, unless we have repented long ago in dust and ashes, the flaming sword of the cherubim waves every way between us and the Tree of Life. Which of us all shall cast the stone at our fallen father Adam, at our frail miserable mother Eve? Have we made any wiser choice? If they did so badly, did not God put it afresh in our power to have done better? After millenniums of experience have proved that the crude apple which perverted Eve was so ruinous and so bitter, have we not plucked it? Have not we too been driven from the Eden of innocence? Was it only in that garden by the Euphrates, or is it also in the ruined garden of every human soul, that by the Tree of Life there grows also the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil?

4. Man has fallen, and men fall, because there is an influence of evil without us which we call Satan, the Accuser, the Tempter, the Destroyer; and there are principles of weakness and corruption within us which we call a fallen nature, or an hereditary taint, or original sin. The two work together. Satan secretly co-operates with our evil tendencies. "Like a pirate at sea he sets upon us with our own colours." He comes as a friend; he comes in

the disguise of an angel of light ; he comes as a false principle of religion quoting a multitude of texts ; he comes as freedom and pleasure, with a smile on the lip and light in the eye, and finds access to us, and makes our passions strong and strange. We yield to him the reins of our soul's chariot, and he leaps into it, and then "the direction is certain, and the road is broad, and the course downwards, and the pace is mad," and at the bottom is—the abyss. The Spirit of God leads us gently. He guides us with his eye ; but when, betrayed by our unrestrained appetites, we have once made a league with death, and a covenant with hell, then the devil sweeps us onward as with the breath of a tempest. All the devils in hell cannot force us to commit one sin. The weakest, youngest Christian, if he chooses, can laugh them all to scorn. We cannot charge our sins on them : over our free will they have no power. But men betray to the enemy the wicket-gate of the fortress of their own souls. Until we do that the fortress is impregnable ; when we betray but a postern to them it is terrible odds but they will become the masters—masters tyrannous and cruel ; and, since Reason, and Conscience, and Innocence were the strong garrison, one by one they will doom that garrison to death.

5. Thus is it, then, that men sin. You may

bind the passions as with cords, as with fresh green withes ; but when they have thus been betrayed to unholy guidance, they rise up in their mad revolt, and the bonds of reason and conscience become but as tow which the flame has touched ! And those bonds, once broken, are never so strong again. Nay, they are replaced by other and fatal bonds, the thousand-fold fetters of habit, in that dungeon of vice whose bars are of iron and its gates of brass. Hence you will see that the best way of conquering sin is to disown it ; to have nothing to do with it ; never to parley with it ; never to linger in its precincts ; never to tamper with its instruments ; to spurn its whispered casuistry ; to say " I cannot—I ought not—I will not." If you would not become the slave of sin, allow it no place in your imagination ; suffer it no admittance into your thoughts. For directly you yield to it passion will produce in your mind the fatal effect of a mirage in the desert ; and then, turning your face from the right road, you will gaze and gaze to madness on a vanishing delusion, which will make you forget all truth and all duty, and after whose empty images you will pant in vain ; till at last, lost, thirsty, weary, fainting, disillusioned, despairing—bitten by fiery serpents—the vulture beating over your head its fetid wings—you lie down, to leave one more carcase in the wilderness, whose scorched

wastes are whitened by so many bleaching bones.

6. And bear in mind, my brethren, that to each separate soul of you temptation comes most awfully in the form of one sin; and the final ruin of a soul is often accomplished by one fatal act of sin. It is true indeed that sins are rarely isolated. They are enmeshed together by multitudes of links. He who has been consciously and deliberately guilty of one vice breaks down within him the hedge of God's vineyard, and through the gap, where at first only one or two little foxes have crept to spoil the vines, soon the wild boars rush in to trample all things under their polluting hoofs. Still, it is mainly in one direction that the desires of the flesh become also desires of the mind; and so in one man it is avarice, in another drink, in another hate, in another dishonesty, in another concupiscence, which becomes the Aaron's rod, and swallows up all other offences. When a man has a besetting sin—that victorious, all other evils are victorious in him; that conquered, he is safe. And as it is one sin which destroys a man, so it is often one act of sin which decides his fate. It is the nature of temptation, when unresisted, to increase in intensity, and then a man advances step by step into crimes of dreadful heinousness, and does what he would once have repudiated with indignation, and becomes what he would once have

regarded with abhorrence. And hence—since Satan tempts, since sin deceives, since the will is weak ; since, in the perversion of the reason and the silencing of the conscience, the moral law loses its grandeur ; since vice grows in seductiveness, and temptation in intensity—for all these reasons the world is what it is, and God's education is frustrated, and men sell themselves to the powers of evil.

7. But now, while we see, while we ought to see the numbers of the terribly wounded in this battle-field of life ; while we see, while we ought to see the fearful power that lies in temptation—let us not for a moment stop at this point ; let us not for a moment rest content with the callousness of immoral acquiescence, or the stupor of faithless despair. It is simply a crime against God to deny the strength and freedom of our will, to talk of destiny, to apologize for vice by statistics, to charge our sins upon Satan, or upon God. To talk thus, to make our strong passions an excuse for our weak reason, is faithlessly to ignore the power of grace and the gift of Christ. Listen to what St. James, the Lord's brother, says : " Let no man say, when he is tempted, ' I am tempted of God,' for God has nothing to do with evil ;\* neither tempteth he any man ; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and en-

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ticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is full-grown, gendereth death." Hear what St. Paul says : " There hath no temptation taken you, but such as man can bear, but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape." Notice two things in that most pregnant utterance. In the first place, St. Paul says, Your temptation, be it what it may, is but a human temptation.\* In other words, do not for a moment pretend that your case is exceptional. That is half vanity and half a lying excuse. How often have men and youths said to me, "It is so difficult to be good!" Difficult, yes! and if you do not try with all your heart, not only difficult but impossible. Difficult, yes! but yet so completely possible to the very weakest of you all, that, if you will use the appointed means which God has placed in your power, the difficulty should be as little a barrier in your heavenward path as the gossamer threads of summer to one who strides across the morning fields. When you are tempted, instead of basely assuming that you cannot but yield, be sure of this, that your temptations are not abnormal temptations, that they are not excessive temptations, that they are apportioned to your feebleness ; that they are but as your day ; that they

\* Ἀνθρώπινος.



are but such as thousands, no better, no stronger, not placed amid less temptations than you are, have triumphantly overcome. And this is the blessed certainty which every true soul strengthens for us. This is the blessed example which every saint of God, however weak, contributes to the redemption of all the world. Every boy who has led a pure life in an impure school ; every youth, who, in a shop or in an office, where all around him bet, or gamble, or indulge in obscene talk, or add the miserable quota of their personal sensuality, at once to their own ruin, and to the world's agony and shame—every youth, I say, who in such surroundings will not do as others do ; every youth in such a school, or shop, or office, who openly refuses to bet, or gamble, or drink, or join in one word of foul talk, and who shows open scorn and discountenance of impure lives ; every saint of God, who has passed his whole life it may be in the burning fiery furnace of temptation, yet over whose garments not even the smell of fire has passed ; yea, every good, true man—every man of principle—and their name, thank God, is legion, and I heard the number of them, and it was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands—all who have either lived holy lives from childhood upward, or who, having erred, have repented in dust and ashes, and given their lives to God—

every such boy, every such youth, every true man, every soul that bravely struggles against sin, every saint of God—yea, even every beaten soldier who is persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed, is a living proof that our temptations are not stronger than we are able to bear.

And what is the second point in St. Paul's memorable sentence? It is that God will with the temptation make also a way to escape. A way to escape—the general way—the way by which alone every temptation can be resisted. What is that? It is to put on the armour of righteousness; to make straight paths for the feet; to watch against every careless hour and every sensual snare; to pray—to live in noble and conscious communion with the Living and Eternal God in His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. But it is more than this. It is to cherish a sense of the moral law as God's will; it is to write that law in our heart, and inscribe it on the tablets of our mind; it is to drive out sin by the constant effort after holiness. In the original, however, it is not *a* way to escape, but something much more blessed, because more specific—"God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make also (as our Revised Version rightly renders it) *the* way of escape." The modes of escaping different temptations are different, but each temptation has its own special mode of conquest and

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deliverance. Temptations of the flesh and of the senses can only be met and overcome by flight; others must be met sword in hand. Some can only be beaten down by incessant blows; others must be stabbed to the heart at once with a single death-wound. Experience very soon teaches you this if you are in earnest. Each temptation has its own special fortress—storm and sack that fortress with a resolution as of life and death. Each temptation entrenches itself in its special time or place of vantage. The day and the night have their own temptations. There is a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and there is a demon that destroyeth in the noonday. Youth has its own temptations, and middle age, and grey hairs. Men have their own temptations, and women theirs. The hour of idleness and the hour of toil, the school and the holiday, the office and the home, the toil of the hand and the effort of the brain—there is not an age, there is not a temperament, there is not a profession which has not alike its own special temptation and alike its own special way of escape. What each separate way is it would be impossible to tell you, nor is it needful, for you can easily learn it if you choose. God will tell you; your reason will tell you. In every sermon you hear, in every true prayer you utter, you will find it. Ah! but have you the self-knowledge, the sincerity, the will to seek it—

midst of sorrow and trial, God never withholds from them that love Him.

Now, these truths were put to the test on a scale peculiarly vast after the death of Christ. The feebleness of the instruments which secured the victory of Christianity was designed, as we are expressly told, to prove that conduct and character are of transcendently higher importance than genius or force; that the ultimate government of the world is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of our God. He chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound those that were mighty; and base things and things despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are.

The intellect of Greece was keen, her poetry splendid, her art unrivalled, her eloquence overwhelming; and yet when the poor worn Jew of Tarsus trod the streets of Athens a hunted, persecuted man; when his bent frame and feeble steps passed along her avenues of noble sculpture; when his strange words were jeered at by philosophers under the shadow of the Acropolis; when the Stoic mocked at the message of Jesus, and the Resurrection,

And the soft garden's rose-encircled child  
Smiled unbelief and shuddered as he smiled;

who could have believed that the might and glory of the future was with the poor Jew, not



with those philosophic and gifted Athenians? Who would have guessed that, in spite of her ægis, and flaming helm, and threatening spear, the awful Pallas of the Acropolis should be forced to resign her Parthenon to the humble Virgin of Nazareth? Not many years afterwards that same suffering missionary who had been ridiculed in Athens was dragged a prisoner to Rome. At that time her Cæsar seemed omnipotent, her iron arms unconquerable. And Rome did not yield without a desperate struggle. She strove to crush and extirpate this "execrable superstition" (as her great writers called Christianity) with sword and flame; she made Christianity a treason; she made her Coliseum swim with the massacre of its martyrs. Yet it was all in vain! The worshippers of the Capitol succumbed before the worshippers in the Catacombs. The thirty legions, the white-robed senators, the ivory sceptre, the curule chair, were all defeated by the Cross, which was the vilest emblem of a slave's torture; and the greatest of earthly empires with her dominion yet unimpaired embraced the gospel preached by the unlettered peasants of the race which she most despised. Why was it? It was because a tree is known by its fruits, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. The fruits of heathendom had been selfishness

and cruelty, and corruption; the fruits of Christianity were love, joy, peace, long-suffering, temperance, goodness, faith, meekness, charity, and the leaves of that tree were for the healing of the nations.

We are naturally reminded at this time of the dawn of Christianity, because during this year a little newly discovered tract has been published, which was written by an unknown Christian in the first century of our era. It is called "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," and was written by a man who might have grasped in friendship the hand of Paul or John; nay, whose young eyes may possibly have gazed on the Lord of Life. Most seasonably does it remind us of what Christianity was in the golden dawn of its early purity. In a complicated age like our own, in an age when Christianity is engaged in a death-struggle with various forms of unbelief, and is entangled in a thousand enfeebling elements of conventionality and compromise, it is most deeply desirable for us to remind ourselves of what Christianity in its very essence was and is; to look once more at the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged.

1. The little book is not, indeed, a statement of Christian doctrines. They are assumed as known already. It is addressed to Catechumens—in other words to converts from heathen-

dom, who had already learnt to believe in the Father who made, in the Son who redeemed, in the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth. Starting from this basis, the instruction given to these candidates for baptism is not unlike the preparation given to our own candidates for confirmation. "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," as here represented, reduces itself to this—the duty and blessedness of a holy life; the sustenance and renewal of that life by sacramental communion with Him who is the Lord.

2. Accordingly, the first section of the book is purely moral. It is called the Two Ways—the Way of Life, and the Way of Death. The writer, like the Apostles, feels that a Christian profession without a holy life is but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. He therefore lays down in the plainest manner that the way of righteousness is life—that it is a way of health and safety, of strength and joy; and that the way of sin and vice is the way of shame, of ruin, and of death. The converts to whom these instructions are addressed came from amidst the degradations of Paganism. Their lot may have been cast in cities like Athens, wholly given to gossip and idolatry; or in marts like Corinth the head-quarters of a seething corruption; or amid the meanness and misery of the neglected masses in vile, slave-crowded capitals like Rome or Ephesus; or in little provincial towns like

Pompeii or Herculaneum, which in their outward brightness were as whitened sepulchres, defiled with every form of abomination. It was necessary, therefore, that they should be taught—nor is it possible to open any newspaper, on any day in the year, without the proof that it is still necessary that men should be taught—as the first elements of Christian morality, that against fraud, and cruelty, and lust, the Almighty has fixed the stern prohibition of His eternal laws; that the way of Mammon, the way of greed and luxury, the way of guilty self-indulgences, the way of murder, and adultery, and theft, are the broad path which leadeth to destruction; and that modesty, and holiness, and purity, and self-denial are the way of life which alone leadeth to fulness of joy.

3. And this teaching is given in the simplest way. "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" shares the characteristics of all the literature which has come down to us from the earliest Christian age. In literary form it cannot compare for a moment with the great classics of Greece and Rome. It does not fascinate us with the charm of genius, or overwhelm us with the pomp of rhetoric, or dazzle us with the flashing gleams of wit. In its prohibition of vice it has none of the gloom and grandeur of Tacitus, or the rushing denunciation of Juvenal. Why, then, was it that the future of the nations

lay with the writers of such humble little treatises as this? It was because they offered to the world something intrinsically diviner, and infinitely more needful, than eloquence or intellect—even a deep and living piety. The spirit which glows in these early Christian writers is that of the warmest love to God and the deepest interest in man as man. The pure, vigorous morality which sprang from these feelings was the one thing most needed for a world effete with the decrepitude of vice. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” While the works of every contemporary heathen author reek with the sickening details of folly, vice, and crime, these humble Christian pastors are ever burning with love to God and men, exhorting to a life of purity in imitation of the life of Christ. Now here you have the secret of Christianity. Tertullian gives it when he says, “You heathens live wicked lives; we only are innocent.” Hermas gives it when he describes the tower of the Church as upheld, not by its inherent strength, but by the fair, flower-like hands of a choir of virgins, who are Love, and Faith, and Purity, and Temperance, and Peace.

4. Some one, however, may say that the better heathens also preached morality, and preached it with a passion and a grace which, in these early Christian writers, are rarely found. Yes; but the power of Christianity lay in this: it gave to

moral laws which were as old as the world itself a new intensity ; it enforced them with diviner sanctions ; it brightened them with fresh hopes ; it endowed men with spiritual life to realize their obligations, and uplifted them with supernatural assistance to fulfil these demands. The theory of morality is valueless unless it has power also to secure its practice. Why was it that truths which had failed to sway the conscience of corrupted Greece when wrapped in the golden haze of Plato's imaginative eloquence, or when they were published in the busy haunts of Athens by Socrates—why was it that those same truths—which had failed though preached by such great and mighty teachers to produce any adequate or general result—did reach, did reclaim, did regenerate the world, when first preached by the Rabbi of Tarsus and the fisherman of Galilee? Why did the torch which had failed to illuminate the world when it had been upheld by such strong hands as those of the great men in Greece and Rome, shed so sunlike a splendour over a world of sin when carried in the weak grasp of the early Christians? I will tell you why it was. It was because behind the truths, behind the preachers of Christianity, lived and moved, unseen yet ever present, the mighty force of Christ. Why does the light of day spread itself over the earth? Because it is drawn from the

inexhaustible fountains of the sun in heaven. Why does the march of tidal waters flush the rivers, and flood the great bays with its lustral wave? Because the swing of the living ocean is behind the harbour bar!

Yes! the force of Christianity was Christ; Christ, not preached in eloquent words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and power; Christ not inured in orthodox dogma but felt in the inmost heart. The reason why these poor early Christians subdued the world is because they were not good merely, but holy; not moral merely, but full of the indwelling Spirit of God. It wrought in them a mighty and inexplicable change. It presented to the world the hitherto undreamed of spectacle of men who had shifted the moral centre of gravity from self to God. When Justin Martyr was led forth to be scourged and beheaded, he was bidden by the scoffing heathen to explain to them the mystery of Christ. "I am too little," he answered, "to say anything great of Him." Yes! but the force of the gospel rested, not in what its preachers said, but in how its children lived.

5. "By their fruits ye shall know them." When the Pagans asked how Christians attained to goodness they were told that it was by conversion—it was by being born again. "While I languished in darkness and deep night," says

St. Cyprian, "tossing upon the sea of a troubled world, I thought it, according to my then habits, altogether strange that, being quickened to new life by baptism, a man might put off the past, and transform his whole self in mind and heart. 'How,' said I, 'is it possible for a man to change alike his character and his habits? How can the luxurious man learn frugality? and he who has shone in costly apparel come down to simple dress? and he who has been proud bear to be humble?'" Well, this was the perplexity of Nicodemus long ago, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" And our Lord replied that he must be born again of water and of the spirit. And Cyprian continues: "But when the stain of my past was washed away, a light, pure and serene, poured into my heart. I was transformed into a new man. The wavering mind became firm; the dark became light; strength came for difficulties; that which I had thought impossible became a practicable thing."

6. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Men who had been converted, who had been born again, however poor, however weak, however unlearned, could not fail. I might show you in a hundred ways what these Christians did. Look how they purified domestic life, in an age infamous for divorce and uncleanness. On an ancient Christian ornament the wedded pair



join hands over a nuptial altar, and the Presbyter utters the words, *Vivatis in Deo*, May ye live in God! "How can I paint," says Tertullian, "the happiness of a marriage which the Church ratifies, the sacrament confirms, the blessing seals, angels announce, and the Lord approves? What a union of two believers!—one hope, one vow, one discipline, one worship! They go together to the church of God, to the table of the Lord. They share each others' persecution and revival. They delight to visit the sick, to supply the needy. They sing, they pray together. Christ rejoices to hear them. He gives them His peace. Where two are together in His name, there is He, and where He is, there the evil one cannot come." "Behold," says Tertullian in another place, "the heathen say, 'How these Christians love one another!' Yea, verily this must strike them, for *they* hate each other. 'And how ready these Christians are to die for one another!' Yea, verily; for *they* are rather ready to kill one another." When he witnessed the virtues of Anthusa, the mother of St. Chrysostom, the Pagan Sophist, Libanius, exclaimed with envy, Βαβαί, οἶαι παρὰ Χριστιανοῖς γυναικὲς εἶσι: "Heavens! how noble the Christian women are!"

Once more, the Christians of that day were poor—yet how they helped each other! When the deacon St. Lawrence was asked, in the

Decian persecution, to show the Prefect the most precious treasures of the Church at Rome he showed him the sick, the lame, the blind.

"It is incredible," said Lucian, the Pagan jeerer and sceptic, "to see the ardour with which those Christians help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brothers." "These Galileans," said Julian the Apostate, "nourish not only their own poor, but ours as well." Such were the testimonies which were won even from the heathen in that first age!

7. My friends, are we Christians? Are we all Christians? I told you not long ago of how a living sceptic had spoken of "a hundred million Pagans in the world, masquerading as Christians;" and a living clergyman has written a book called "Modern Christianity, a Civilized Heathendom." Now I will not ask whether in this city, in this nineteenth century, our society presents these ideal pictures of the life of converted men, these pictures of high and pure morality, of large and ungrudging magnanimity, of sweet and perfect domestic love; or whether we see a levity and a vileness, a grasping and a luxury, or a callous indifference and a hard selfishness, an intense and passionate mammon-worship, a deep-seated hypocrisy, and a grievous recrudescence of the spirit of falsehood. I will not ask whether after nineteen centuries of

Christianity we have an abundant supply of honest, plain-sailing men, who will do tough work and live pure lives, and speak no slander, no, nor listen to it. I will not ask these questions. Ask them searchingly of yourselves. But look at one fact. In the year 252 a plague raged in Carthage. The heathens threw out their dead and sick upon the streets, and ran away from them for fear of the contagion, and cursed the Christians. St. Cyprian, on the contrary, assembled his congregation, and told them to love those who cursed them; and the rich working with their money, the poor with their hands, never rested till the dead were buried, the sick cared for, and the city saved from destruction.

Again, in the year 263, there was a plague in Alexandria. "All things," wrote the Bishop of Alexandria, the great Dionysius, "are filled with tears and groans for the multitude of the dying and dead. There is not a house in which there is not one dead. But we rejoice in the peace of Christ. Most of our brethren by their exceeding love, not sparing themselves and adhering to one another, were constantly ministering to the sick without fear and cessation, and healing them in Christ."

That was sixteen centuries ago. Well, in this year, 1884, we have cholera in Europe; and Marseilles, and Toulon, and Arles, are Christian

cities ; and Christian examples have been shown there by the noble few ; but I ask you was there anything better than heathen Carthage and heathen Alexandria in the pusillanimous selfishness, the reckless terror, the headlong flight, the wild stampede of paltry cowardice, which not only hundreds, but thousands, and tens of thousands of nominal Christians in those cities have displayed ? Who, reading that miserable story, and having thrust upon him the things that are thrust upon us every day, would not exclaim, not only, "God, give us saints !" but even, "God, give us men !" I ask again, are we Christians ? If so, then by our fruits we shall be known. It will not in the least help us merely to *say* we are, if we live as though we were not. But this I will say—and this too the author of the little first-century tract to which I have alluded teaches—that if we are Christians we ought to be communicants. The moral life, still more the holy life, cannot be kept strong and living within us save by communion with Christ ; and the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Supper of the Lord is one of His own appointed means of at once nourishing, and testifying, and renewing our communion with Him. I dwell no further on that topic now, because I have addressed you upon it so often. We are about to kneel together at the Supper of the Lord. All who come to it in

humility and penitence, in faith and love, know well the richness of the blessing which they there receive; they who turn away from it are alienating themselves from the brotherhood of Christians who in all ages have felt it to be their duty and their joy to obey the loving command of their Lord : "Do this in remembrance of Me."

## XIV.

### Death-bed Repentance.

“Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.”

2 KINGS xx. 1.



DESIRING to turn our thoughts from the clamorous and dazzling urgency of the world, and to fix them on the things not seen, I spoke, two Sundays ago, of the eternity, amid which, whether we will or no, we live and move and have our being. When shall we feel the existence of those unseen realities? There are some, but perhaps not many, who fix their hopes on the supposed power of death to awaken them from the dream of a sinful life. On the other hand, there are undoubtedly far more who hope in a postponed repentance, and vainly trust to that shifting and dragging anchor to hold the frail vessel of their soul amid the storm. Like the yet unconverted Augustine, they pray to God, it may be, to deliver them from their sins, and hope that He will not hear them just yet. They

wish to be pardoned, and yet to retain the offence ; and think that, on the bed of death at any rate, or when old age has turned their lives to ashes, and rendered impossible the pleasures of sense and of the world, they will have leisure, and desire, and opportunity to turn to God. Now I wish to show you that of all hopes this, at any rate, is the most absolutely futile.

1. In the first place, it is a great mistake to suppose that all persons, or even the majority, have anything which can be called a death-bed. They live in the full blossom of their sins and vanities till in due time, one by one,

Some with lives that come to nothing, some with deeds as well  
undone,  
Death comes suddenly and takes them where men never see the  
sun.

Thousands die by what we call accident. They are cut off as in a moment : as by a lightning flash. Thousands more pass into the unseen world, not down the lingering declivities of disease, but by some swift and sudden departure. As I look back upon life's memories, I recall many an instance in which men and women have seemed to be in their usual health up to the very week, or even the very day, on which they died. They have had no misgiving, no intimation, no foregleam of the awful event

which was so close to them. The Shadow with the keys has awaited them on the broad roadside, and they have been unconscious of his presence until his icy touch has stilled their hearts. Their life ends as though a trivial everyday sentence should stop short without so much as a comma. They are snatched away from the midst of their most ordinary avocations, feverishly busy about all things, save the one thing needful.

But even when the death is not thus absolutely sudden, how often have I seen persons who were ill wholly refuse to believe or realize that their sickness was unto death. Almost till the day of their departure they have talked quite confidently of what they intended to do when they rose from the bed of sickness ; have perhaps even seemed to themselves to be much better just before they sank into the long swoon which can only end in the last fluttering sigh. "O God, they have deceived me then ! and this is death !" was the startling exclamation of a sinful English king, and with those words he sank back and died. And very commonly for hours, and even for days before death, men and women lie quite unconscious ; the pulse still beats, the breath still labours, possibly the tongue still murmurs, as the imagination floats amid the confused reminiscences of the past, and babbles of green fields far



away. But no voice of exhortation can reach them then ; they can gather no thought into consecutive meaning ; they can breathe no prayer to Him into whose awful presence they are about to enter.

ii. Again, even when men have a conscious death-bed, how often does it happen that they cannot summon up their energies to think or pray. When the flames of a fever have begun already to calcine the tablets of the memory, or confusion clouds the troubled soul, or agony absorbs the faculties, or the pressing needs of earth are still terrifically urgent—ah ! it is not easy then to set about the one task of life, which is, of all others, the most awfully important.

iii. Once more, in that dread hour, the very capacity for repentance seems often to be paralyzed. Men see, they know, they confess the waste and guilt of miserable lives ; but anything more seems to be too late, seems to be beyond their power. Many who have been recovered from drowning have recorded that at the moment when they sank for the last time, and the dread struggle was over, they saw, in one flash of light, and with remorse and shame, every event of their past lives vividly portrayed, backward, in reverse order, from the moment of their death. Yet I cannot recall a single instance of any one who has said that he

was thereby moved to repentance. Remorse and repentance are two very different things. Repentance leads back to life; but remorse ends often in the painless apathy and fatal mortification of despair.

iv. Experience on a large scale confirms all that I have said. It happens not unfrequently on battlefields, in earthquakes, in shipwrecks that men are brought in large multitudes face to face with death. On such occasions we scarcely ever hear one whisper about repentance. It is indeed sadly notorious that, when vessels seem doomed to inevitable destruction, the first impulse of the sailors is to burst open the spirit stores, and drink to intoxication, that they may die like natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed. A quarter of a century ago, a huge vessel from California, named "The Central America," foundered at sea by night. A few survivors only were picked up by the crew of a vessel which, sailing through the darkness, was startled to hear voices from the ocean waves. Those survivors told a strange tale. The sailors when all hope was gone had rushed to drink and die. The vessel had on board many successful gold-diggers. Of these some in their despair flung their gold wildly about the deck, and some as wildly scrambled for it. Others loaded their belts and pockets with all the gold that they could

carry, and when the ship went down, they too sank like lead amid the mighty waters. Another, floating on a plank, was chilled to the heart by the frightful loneliness of that midnight sea, and rejoiced when in the struggling starlight he saw a plank carried near him to which was lashed another sufferer. The wave flung the plank beside him, and he gazed upon the features of a corpse! But the strangest tale was that of one who told that, as he floated amid the darkness, expecting instant death from the lashing surge, he heard the voice of his mother, long since dead, say to him quite distinctly "Johnnie, did you eat sister's grapes?" And then he recalled, what for long years he had wholly forgotten, that, as a little boy he had been sent by his mother to buy some grapes for a sister dying of consumption, and had eaten them on the way, and told a lie about it; and the sad reproachful question of his mother had been written on those pages of memory which are the Book of God, and its letters had gleamed out fitfully under the weird lamp of death. But not one of all these said one word about being moved to repentance at that dread hour. Often indeed the memories of that hour are very partial. One little incident—one childish error or boyish sin—flashes into prominence; and deadlier and graver crimes are wholly forgotten. "The last thoughts of

this unhappy man," we read in a recent story, "went back upon his early days ; and things which he had passed without thinking of stood before him like his tombstone. None of his recent crimes came back now to his memory to disturb it ; there was time enough after the body for them ; but trifles light as air which had first depraved the mind, and sins whose repetition had made slippery the soul—these, like the alphabet of death, grew plain to him."

2. Have I not then said enough to show that he who relies for pardon or for penitence upon death and death-beds is leaning all his hopes upon a spider's web ? I do not say that even then there may not come, as there came to that miracle of mercy, the penitent thief upon the cross, pardon and peace even in those dread hours. That one instance is given us that we should not despair ; that one only that we might not presume. Shall I illustrate to you how precarious and how terrible is the dependence on that chance ? A boy was let down over a cliff in the Hebrides to gather sea-birds' eggs, and while he stood on a ledge of the precipice the rope swung out of his grasp. What should he do ? Above him was the sheer cliff ; before him the swaying rope ; beneath him the shattering fall and the cruel sea. The rope still swung ; if he sprang to it as it came nearest him he might be saved ;

an instant more and it would be too late. It was one of those instants on whose tremendous resolution depends our fate, and whose blood-curdling agony in one moment turns the young hair white. There was no time to think. He sprang, and he was saved ; but the chances were ten thousand to one that he would have fallen ; that, paralyzed with fright and agony, he would have found impossible the grim resolve. Would you like to leave all to the horror of such a moment ? Will you risk all on that dangling rope of a death-bed repentance when you stand alone on the precipice of death, and have to leap the awful chasm which is cleft between this world and the world beyond the grave ?

3. Earnestly then would I say to you trust not in death ; trust not in death-beds ; death cannot save you ; a death-bed you may never have ; and if you have a lingering death, it may come in circumstances which render penitence impossible. Trust not in death ; trust not in death-beds—trust in life ; trust in God ; trust on Christ's help in the living present which alone is yours.

Let your thought of death be rather the present stimulus to repent of your sins, to seek your Saviour. Remember how short your time is. In the fourth century there lived a bad Patriarch of Alexandria named Theopictus.

He had lived for envy, and hatred, and religious intrigue, and for money, and for the world. He had never thought of death, and his last words, just before he sank into the lethargy which terminated many crimes, were these: "Happy wert thou, Abbot Arsenius, to have had this hour constantly before thine eyes." Let the thought of death, so certain to come soon, so uncertain when, lead you to think of the long-suffering of God. Lean on Him. Lean on the love of your Saviour. Think of the value of your soul for which He was nailed to the cross; and if you fling yourself now, ere it be too late, on His compassion, you will soon learn to regard death not as a terror but as a friend, knowing that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of the Lord, and there shall no torment touch them." My friends, if the love of God lead you to repentance, then for you the great work of life is done. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto Me and I will have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Only remember that even trust in God is but presumption, if we are making His love a cloak for iniquity; and that trust in Christ is itself utterly vain while we are living in glaring opposition to His will. "If ye love Me" said Christ, "keep My commandments." If you do despite unto the Spirit of Grace, if you

crucify to yourselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame—while you are still doing so, can you still claim His promises as yours? Was His sacrifice a plenary indulgence, a free permission to commit all uncleanness with greediness? Love Christ by doing the will of God: seek Him; surrender to Him your worldly desires and ambitions; slay for His sake your evil passions; be sincere in your charity, in your truthfulness, in your holiness; live above the base conventional standard of the world, and then all the banded powers of Hell shall be reduced to impotence before you. And do not deceive yourself. Perhaps you profess to belong to the so-called religious world? That will not save you. It is as full of envy, malice, falsehood, hatred, as the secular world, only they take more specious forms. Do you fear God? Do you, in deed and truth, love your fellow-men? Are you keeping God's commandments? Then you are safe through Christ. Then, but only then. I am amazed at the levity with which men who are violating every commandment of God, often, in the very name of religion, boldly say, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin." My friends, there is no such text. How? you will say. Have we not heard it quoted a thousand times? No such text? And you will eagerly turn to your Bibles to refute me. Well, turn to

your Bibles, and read: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not the truth; *but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." Ah that is the text—the other is not a text; it is a fragment. It would be just as senseless to tell you positively "Ye shall die in your sins," leaving out the conditions "Except ye believe," as it is senseless to say, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," leaving out the condition, "If we walk in the light, if we love one another." That is as little a universal promise, as the other is a universal threat. The one is a threat, the other is a promise, dependent on conditions, the avoidance and the fulfilment of which are of an importance absolutely infinite in our human lives.

4. This, then, I would say in conclusion: See all things, not in the blinding and deceitful glare of the world's noon, but as they will seem when the shadows of life are closing in. At evening the sun seems to loom large on the horizon, while the landscape gradually fades from view; and then the sunset reveals the infinitude of space crowded with unnumbered worlds, and the firmament glows with living sapphires. Even so, let the presence of God loom large upon the narrow horizon of your




life, and the firmament of your souls glow with the living sapphires of holy thoughts. You may never have a death-bed ; but imagine yourself on a death-bed now. If you were, indeed, stretched on the bed from which you should arise no more, how would all your little intrigues, all your little frivolities, all your vices, and spites, and enmities, and hatreds, and worldly schemes seem to you then? Would they not shrivel into insignificance? Would they not seem to you small, poverty-stricken, base, as well as evil? What alchemy has death to transmute these into things of eternal value? Two children are sent into the fields to glean among the reapers. The one comes home laden with the ripe golden ears, happy with the results of toil and the sense of duty done ; the other has played, and idled, and chased butterflies, all through the long summer day, and comes back, sick and shamed and fretful and afraid, with nothing in its hand but a few acrid, flaccid, poisonous, withered poppies faded from scarlet into lurid blackness, which have poisoned its blood and stained its hands, and are only fit to fling away as hateful, not only valueless but vile. Which child will your life resemble? I am speaking to some of the young. " Rejoice, oh, young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth." I believe the advice was given seriously

not cynically, and in a world "wrapped round with sweet air, and full of sunshine, and abounding with knowledge," if you keep innocence you will find much happiness. Only "remember"; remember that the vernal hues of life's sunshine gleam on the solemn and awful background of the eternal realities. Ah, try how to look at the world and its allurements as they will seem in the last hour; to look at unlawful pleasure as it shall then seem, not only a disappointing, but a depraving and an envenomed thing; to look at the small aims of ambition as they shall seem when they have dwindled into their true paltriness. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

## XV.

### Of the Inner Reverence of a Man for his own Person.

“Reverence my sanctuary, I am the Lord.”—LEV. xix. 30.

HE application which I shall give to these words is absolutely different from that in which they were first used, and yet it is absolutely scriptural. I have preached on them once before to point their primary lesson, which is reverence for the consecrated places in which we worship God; but, in our dispensation, while the primary lesson is emphasized, it is also strengthened by the yet deeper secondary lesson, that the spiritual habitation of the true God is the heart of the Christian man, and that His Holy Spirit loveth “before all temples the upright heart and pure.” “Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in you, except ye be reprobates?” We reverence God’s holiest sanctuary when we reverence ourselves.

2. It is now many years ago since I first read, while yet a youth, a passage which influenced me very deeply, and which I have always regarded as one of the noblest passages in English literature. It is "On the Inner Reverence of a Man for his own Person," and occurs in "The Reason of Church Government," one of the prose works of our mighty Puritan poet, John Milton.

It is as follows :—" And if the love of God, as a fire sent from Heaven to be ever kept alive upon the altar of our hearts, be the first principle of all godly and virtuous actions in men, this pious and just honouring of ourselves is the second, and may be thought as the fountain-head whence every laudable and worthy enterprise issues forth ; and, although I have given it the name of a liquid thing, yet it is not incontinent to bind itself, as humid things are, but hath in it a most restraining and powerful abstinence to start back, and globe itself upward from the mixture of any ungenerous and unbecoming motion, or any soil wherewith it may peril to stain itself. Something I confess it is to be ashamed of evil-doing in the presence of any ; and to reverence the opinion and countenance of a good man rather than a bad, fearing most in his sight to offend, goes so far as almost to be virtuous ; yet this is but still the fear of infamy, and many such, when they find them-

selves alone, saving their reputation, will compound with other samples, and come to a close treaty with their dearer vices. But he that holds himself in reverence and due esteem, both for the dignity of God's image upon him, and for the price of his redemption, which he thinks is visibly marked upon his forehead, thinks himself both a fit person to do the noblest and godliest deeds, and much better worth than to deject and defile, with such a debasement and pollution as sin is, himself, so highly ransomed and ennobled to a new friendship and filial relation with God. Nor can he fear so much the offence and reproach of others as he dreads and would blush at the reflexion of his own severe and modest eye upon himself, if it should see him doing or imagining that which is sinful, though in the deepest secrecy." In that passage, my friends, and in the truths on which it is based, I see the inmost secret of a noble life.

3. Oh, if all men and women, in early youth especially, could but draw in the full rich meaning of this thought, and make it their own, what a safeguard might it be to them ! Myriads have hung round their necks what they thought to be the relics of saints, or fragments of the true cross, just as the Mohammedan wears scraps of the Qur'ân, and the Jew puts texts into his phylacteries. Useless and superstitious are all such prophylactics ; but the youth or the

maiden, who has taken into the soul some ennobling truth, has an amulet which is better than any ornament of grace, and shall enable them to walk unscathed amid the fire of many a fierce temptation. Such an amulet would I fain hang around their necks to-day. Last Sunday I held up before you a great principle of action towards others, and asked you to gaze with me upon its lustre—the jewel of “Honour all men;” to-day I would ask you to accept another and no less precious amulet—the jewel of Self-respect.

4. If you consider, you will find that there is scarcely a sin which does not concentrate into itself the venom of many sins. In every sin there is a triple taint: it is sinfulness against God, whose law it violates; against our neighbour, whom it inevitably injures; against ourselves, whom it destroys. But the reason why every sin is thus a threefold cord of iniquity is because the Tabernacle of God is with men; so that, in every act of sin, we sin against Him by defiling His Temple; against ourselves, by desecrating the inner sanctity of His Being; against others, because they too are His living sanctuaries. When the great American orator, Daniel Webster, was asked what thought impressed him most by its sublimity, he answered, “The thought of my immediate accountability to God.” But it is a form of this thought yet more

impressive to feel that God is with us and in us ; that every sin against ourselves, that every sin against our brother-man, is also a sin committed in His very presence-chamber, and therefore also a sin committed against Him. In this point of view every sin becomes a sacrilege within the very veil of the Holy of Holies, which is the sanctuary of our inner being.

5. Among the many aspects in which sin may be regarded, I know none more solemnly preservative than this. Sin should be hateful to us, should be impossible to us ; we should, if our hearts were but right with God, shrink from it as a degradation. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" asked the pure and lovely youth, who stands on the page of Scripture as the eternal type of youth's victory over the deadly glamour of sensual temptation. "How can I?" Oh, that every youth would ask the same ! How can I so sink as to sin against God, even my God ? How can I sin against myself, against the majesty of my own convictions, against the dignity of my own nature, against the sacredness of my own life, against God's great and holy angels of Reason and Conscience, who hold me by the hand ? In sinning against myself, I sin not against a mere handful of dust, a mere creature of clay, but against everything which is majestic, eternal, and divine ; against light, against the Holy

Spirit, against the Lord Jesus my Saviour, against the eternal Lord of all my life. The Hebrew boy could say it, who knew nothing of the Incarnation and the Resurrection; how much more ought we to say it—we to whom God has spoken in His Son, and has revealed the secret of the ages—that mystery “where God in man is one with man in God?”

6. A living poet has said—

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovran power.

It is most true. Self-reverence depends upon self-knowledge, and leads to self-control, and these are the elements of true greatness. Let us sweep aside the world's estimate of greatness. The puppetries of wealth and rank, the pretentious dignities of a little brief authority have no place here. Our smart apparel, our small pomposities, our little lordships—at one touch of Death's finger how do they shrivel and vanish into a nothing less than nothing; only the inherent grandeur of the bare soul remains, and a pauper's may be far grander than a king's. The world has deified mere insects, just as Egypt worshipped beetles and crocodiles. It has put the diadem on brows that should have had the branding-iron, and thrown the purple over shoulders that deserved the whip. The world bows to Dives, and Nero, and Caiaphas; but true humanity



knows them not, and true praise spurns them. Measure life by the measure of a man, that is of an angel, and you will find that the divinest souls have been swayed, more than all, by the inner reverence for their own personality; by the awful sanctity of their own being; by the honour they have felt, not for their own poor gifts or acquisitions, but for themselves as in Christ, as being partakers of the Divine in the essential nature which God gave them; as being a little lower than the angels, and as souls for which Christ died.

7. Now I might proceed to tell you categorically that this inner reverence of a man for his own person produces this or that quality. But—though I may be wrong—it seems to me that such truths may sometimes come more clearly home to you in the concrete than in the abstract. Our Lord, when he spoke to the multitudes in parables, was thus throwing abstract truth into the concrete; was embodying it in tales; was illustrating it by the lives of men. One at least of His parables—that of the pounds—was merely a leaf from the life and adventures of King Herod Archelaus; and it was the same probably with others of them. To the Son of Man, and to Him alone, was it given to enshrine multitudes of eternal truths in a few brief touches to move men's hearts for ever. But, though we cannot invent parables, we too

may tear leaves from God's great books of biography and history, and get help from them to learn the lessons of our Master, Christ. And I would thus show this morning how this high reverence for our own being lifts men above temptation—how the absence of it, or unfaithfulness to it, plunges them in vice and shame.

8. For instance, self-reverence results in the preservation of innocence, of perfect childlike innocence in men—"the heart of childhood taken up and glorified into the powers of manhood," "the young lamb's heart amid the full-grown flocks." This is one of the loveliest, if not always the most instructive, forms of human character. Let me give you some instances of men in whose pure lives reigned this lovely self-respect. You all know the "soft, silent, pathetic pictures" of Fra Angelico; the angel faces which he saw in his visions; the heavenly scenes which he reproduced in colours bathed in the sunlight of peace, delicate and radiant as the hues of heaven. That dewy freshness could only come from inmost purity of heart in one who walked with God; who in his sweet humble cell heard the melodies of angels, who caught glimpses of their waving robes under the olive trees of Fésòle, and who in the splendours of sunset saw their rushing wings. \*There have been painters—alas! not a few of them—who could

\* See Ruskin's "Modern Painters," ii. 132, and *passim*.

paint nothing good; but only blood, and vice, and horror, and the guzzlings of the tavern. This painter could not paint evil. Set him to paint devils, or cruel men, or low scenes, or base faces—his hand drops and fails; such evil was not in him. The serpent had not slunk into his Eden, nor the croucher at the door bounded into his monastic cell. He would never paint for money—what was money to a poor monk who lived in heaven? He would not accept the Archbishopric of Florence—what were Archbishoprics to one who saw God's face? We had such another painter in our English William Blake, with his childlike innocent soul, and the indefinable purity and sweetness of his designs and of his songs. He was very poor—but what was poverty to one who in the dawn saw an innumerable host of angels praising God, and whose pure abode was full of heaven? We had yet another such a man in the poet Wordsworth. In that sweet lowly cottage among its trees by Rydal Lake, he envied no title, and no palace, and no riches: was it not a truer and loftier happiness to commune with the sights and sounds of Nature in perfect peace, careless of personal talk, believing in mankind, "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife?" And this it was which enabled him to be indifferent to the ignorant brutalities of base criticism, secure in the blessed conviction that his works would co-operate with.

every beneficent influence in human life, and that he "had added sunlight to daylight by making the happy happier." Such lives are free from the taint of vice and baseness ; the trail of the serpent is not over them ; they pour silent contempt on ambition and on gold.

9. Again, this self-reverence, even when it has failed to produce an absolute innocence, may yet lead to the repentance of intense conviction. If it have not kept a soul from lying for a moment among the dust and potsherds of a sensuous life, it can yet uplift it from them, and give it the wings of a dove, which is covered with silver wings, and its feathers like gold. So it was with Dante. Probably no man ever lived who felt a haughtier estimate of the grandeur of his own individuality. The true symbol of him is his own crest—a wing on an azure field. I think of him walking through his later life, like his own angel in the "*Inferno*," utterly disdainful of all vileness and foulness, waving away from his face the gross air of the poisonous marsh. With what brief marvellous touches does he show his scorn for the littlenesses and basenesses in which many so habitually live. In the "*Inferno*" he represents himself as lingering, for one moment, to listen to the coarse quarrel and mutual abuse of two lost souls ; but when Virgil says to him, rebukingly, "A moment more and I shall be displeased at thee," he feels over-

whelmed with shame at the mere momentary littleness which made him take interest in such vulgarities. Alas! we have sunk far below Dante; and such vulgarities are to many men in these days as the breath of their nostrils. It was this scorn of meanness, this stateliness of soul, this fastidious refusal to dwell on the record of things foul and personal, which made Dante a "soul awful, if this world has ever held an awful soul." Can you imagine Dante poring over the miserable details of a matrimonial disgrace? or mistaking for history the ribaldries of personal dispute? or taking part in the unbridled exhibitions of vulgar animosity? He was as incapable of a coarse statesmanship as of a base prurience. He breathed a more empyreal atmosphere, and

Darker are the abodes  
Of Kings, tho' his be poor,  
While fancies like the gods'  
Pass thro' the door!

Oh! compare him with the poets who, instead of this inspiring sense of the supreme realities, have been content to pander to the vilest passions. Even great poets have flung unhallowed incense upon the vestal flames of genius, and some of them, like Chaucer and Burns, have had to weep bitter, burning, ineffectual tears of remorse as they called to mind that it would remain their curse for ever to have pandered to corruption, and increased thereby the degradation of man-

kind. Dante teaches us, as few have taught us, that even in distress, and failure, and ruin, a man may still be conscious that he was made in God's image, after His likeness.

10. I will take but one more illustration of self-respect as the basis of moral nobleness—that of him who wrote the grand words with which I introduced this sermon. We have seen that it is the amulet of innocence; we have seen that it is the crown of moral renovation; it is also the column of an unconquerable fortitude. Milton, like Dante, was a man from whom all the brave, and the pure and good may learn—a character of virginal purity and angelic strength, who, sitting, like Marius, amid the ruins of his life, could even there overawe his raging foes. I rejoice greatly that he was closely connected with this church. His best-loved wife and infant child lie buried here; his name is recorded on our marriage register. St. Margaret's stands very near the home of his later years, and here he must have sometimes worshipped with Cromwell, and Vane, and Hampden. I rejoice that the well-counselled munificence of one of the generous and public-spirited sons of America—my friend, Mr. George Childs, of Philadelphia—is about to give us a splendid window in this church to his memory. For he is a model of manly dignity; and (as has well been said) "his elevation is connected with his pureness, since pureness

and kindness are the two signal virtues, the two mighty wings of Christianity, with which it winnowed and renewed, and still winnows and renews, the world." It was from this noble chastity that came the "glow and mighty eloquence" of his writings; that something of indescribably heroic and magnificent which always overflows from him, which enabled him, as it were, "to wrap us in a fold of his robe, and to carry us away with him to the eternal region where is his home." It was from this self-reverence that comes his supreme note of distinction and gravity, his constancy and perseverance, his contempt of everything mean and sordid, his indifference to celebrity, the grandeur of a poverty and a misfortune to which kings might have bowed in reverence, "the energy kept in its high and spacious armoury until the signal of action sounded." These are above the comprehension of petty minds; they are above the comprehension, as they are above the gaze, "of noisy drummers in their caps and tassels;" but they teach the true glory of self-respect to those who to the weeds and brambles of the wilderness prefer the palms and cedars of Paradise. I cannot speak further of him now than to say that, if Shakespeare surpassed him, as he surpassed all men in his myriad-minded and oceanic genius, yet Milton was the purer, and the rarer, and the nobler in his stainless manhood. Read the sonnets of Shakespeare,

and then read the sonnets of Milton. Every sonnet of Milton is an organ note of lofty music of which some might seem worthy to be chanted amid the swinging censers of the seraphim ; but in reading the sonnets of Shakespeare, rich and tender as they are, we sometimes fear lest haply the place whereon we are standing should be unholy ground. If it were Milton's intellectual limitation, was it not also his heroic grandeur, that he could not have reproduced a Falstaff, and that for that "foul grey-haired iniquity" he would have had no other words than those of Henry V.:

I know thee not, old man : fall to thy prayers ;  
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester !  
I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,  
So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane ;  
But being awake I do despise my dream.

Once again, I do not apologize for bringing before you such names, such examples. They are just as sacred, just as instructive, as the names of Joseph and Daniel ; for are they not children of that Kingdom of Heaven, the least of whose children, Christ said, is, in privileges, greater than the greatest of the old dispensation ? The youth of this day, so given to self-indulgence and to frivolity ; the middle classes of this day, so immersed in the dusty whirl of greedy and struggling competitions ; the society of this



day, too often a pleonasm of vanity and emptiness, needs such examples of pure aims and noble lives.

“Thou shalt reverence my sanctuary.” Augustine gives the inmost meaning of the exhortation, when he says “Dost wish to worship in a temple? Worship in thyself; but first be thou a temple of the Lord.” That is what these our loftier brothers did, and what they were. But to end, my friends, you know that it is not Dante or Milton, or any saint, who can in any way otherwise than by silent far-off example help or raise us. It cost more to redeem our souls, so that they must let that alone for ever. We gaze at them sometimes, just as sometimes we gaze at the reflexion of the stars in the water, or the refraction of the sunbeams through the evening clouds. But the source of all earthly life is the sun; and the source of all spiritual life is the Sun of righteousness, risen upon us with healing in His wings. If we look at even the noblest men it is but to see how they reflected some one ray of His glory. If they learnt that high respect for themselves—that inward reverence for their own persons—it was because they had learnt that He was with them and in them; that He dwelt with them and walked in them; that His awful yet gentle eye was on all their actions; that they could enter no darkness of secrecy so deep as

should hide them from the light of His Holy Spirit in their hearts. They estimated the grandeur of their human nature—the duty of respecting it in themselves and in others—from the triple fact that He took our nature upon Him ; that He valued it at a price so awful as to die for it ; that He has enthroned it in the Godhead for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on High. That, and not the questions which fill the minds of Christians with mutual bitterness—that, the triple faith in the Incarnate, the Crucified, the Risen Christ—is the Alpha and the Omega of all Christianity which is in the least degree worth the name. It is the secure foundation for the two rules, “ Reverence thyself,” “ Honour all men,” of which the first is the basis of all personal dignity, and the second of all wise and holy conduct towards our brother-man.

## XVI.

### Honour all Men.

“Honour all men.”—1 PETER, ii. 17.

**I**N the brief sermon of a Communion Sunday I cannot hope to bring before you the depth and many-sided significance of this casual utterance of two words in the Epistle for to-day. Scripture has multitudes of such gems. I can but hold up this to you for a few moments, though I despair of showing you its full depth of lustre.

1. I hold that no rule could be put into human language which is of more value than this in guiding the method of our dealings with our brother-men. It points to that principle which our Lord said was the Law and the Prophets—was in other words the summary of Scripture—namely, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them.” Those who go to Christ, and not to custom for their view of that which is essential in religion, know the infinitesimal value of profession and

ceremonies, beside the great law of love to our neighbour. A great deal that calls itself religion; that mixes itself up with religion; that regards itself as the championship and mainstay of religion, is of high value in its own estimation; only it knows nothing of fairness or kindness, only it tramples habitually on the law of love. And then you may gild crosses upon its altars, and weave symbolic figures upon its ephods, and enthrone it in all the pomposity of usurpation over the conscience and the rights of man; nevertheless, it is then of no more worth than the small dust of the balance. Not so with the new commandment, the royal law of Christ. That law rests not on the crumbling basis of varying ordinances, nor on the tottering foundation of disputable traditions, but on the foundation of broad eternal truths, on the foundation of Christ Himself. For we cannot understand either why or how we should honour all men unless we know what this meaneth, "The Word became flesh."

2. "Honour all men." There is a strange universality about the precept. All but the brutish understand the duty of giving honour where honour is due; all but the vile honour those whose lives are beautiful with the beauty of holiness and noble with the nobleness of God. But are we to honour the mean, the base, the despicable, the depraved? Ay! there, my

friends, lies the deepest meaning of the rule: their dishonour, their depravity, their baseness we honour not; but we honour the majesty of their nature even in its fall. As Michael Angelo sees in the rough block of marble the winged angel struggling to be free; as Flaxman, walking in the slums, sees the beauties and possibilities of the "human face divine" even under the dirt and squalor of the gutter-child, even so with pity and reverence the true Christian sees even in the lowest the marred work of Him who breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. In the most fallen of the children of men he still honours the immortality which seemed so priceless to the Lord of Glory, that, for the sake of it, He descended step by step to the lowest round of the infinite abyss, died for it upon the Cross, united it with the Godhead for ever, and took it up to the right hand of the Majesty on High.

3. "Honour all men." Alas! as life goes on, it is more and more our temptation to honour no man. I appeal to every one of you who has mingled much with the world, whether all your faith in human nature has not often seemed to be shaken to its foundations. How large a part is played in the world by unfairness and intrigue! By what hollow idols of the cave, the forum, and the theatre the opinions of men are ruled! how, in all but the few noblest souls, we detect, behind the pompous sanctuaries of pro-

fession and the assembly rooms of conventional morality, the little hidden chambers of mean-ness, where all the baser work of life is done in secret! How rare is absolute truthfulness! How subtle the taint of selfishness! How venomous the claw with which the sick beast of envy strikes! And I would ask every student of history among you whether he, too, has not shuddered at the blood-stained and lust-polluted annals of mankind, with their innumerable tales of misery and death.

4. Nor can we be surprised, our human nature being what it is, if even good and great men have succumbed at times to the fatal temptation of despairing of humanity. Such has often been the judgment of practical men of the world, whom experience has confirmed in disbelief of goodness. "Every man has his price," said Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister of England for more than twenty years. It is not true, but he had seen enough of evil to make him think it true. "There is something not wholly displeasing to us in the misfortunes of our best friends," said La Rochefoucauld. It is not true, but he had seen enough to justify the odious imputation. οἱ πλείονες κακοί—"Most men are bad:" there is the summary of the Greek philosopher, who deliberately left it as the maxim of his wisdom. It is not true, we hope, but there is a dreadful amount of evidence

to be urged for it. And many others have spoken similarly. There is the conclusion of depravity—a Nero, a Heliogabalus avowing their distinct conviction that not one man is pure. There is the scorn of Cynicism—Diogenes searching Athens for a man, and beating away those who came to him as not men but appetites. Even in Scripture, there is the Psalmist saying, in his haste, that “all men are liars.” There is the heartrending cry of the Prophet, that, in all Jerusalem, he cannot find one who is righteous. There is the gloomy pessimism and repellent misogyny of Ecclesiastes, that though in a thousand he might find one good man, he had not found one good woman. These sweeping generalizations are not true, some of them are hideously false; yet they do correspond to a large series of phenomena, and, if we have no faith to redress the balance, man becomes indeed a thing of naught. Miserable they, and not without fault themselves, who have met with nothing whereby to correct such experiences; and yet there is so much superficial evidence for them, that more than one of the noblest of our race has died with the bitter declaration that men were not worth their immense self-sacrifice. Take the case of Roger Bacon, one of the finest of human intellects. The greatest man by far of the thirteenth century, his genius anticipated the

discoveries of 500 years. What was his reward? It was the reward of Isaiah, and all the greatest prophets of mankind; the reward of Huss, and all the greatest reformers; the reward of Galileo, and all the greatest men of science; the reward of Origen, and all the greatest saints, to whom, like Athanasius, the world and the professing Church left "no friend but God and death, the one a defender of his innocency, the other a finisher of all his troubles." What shall I say? It was that reward which mankind, led by its Priests and Pharisees, gave to the Son of Man, and which mankind, led by its Priests and Pharisees, has always given during their lifetime to its greatest and its best. Roger Bacon had the deep misfortune to be surrounded all his life long by monks and priests, who took for infallibility their own narrow ignorance, and for religion their own deplorable superstition; and who, by giving to his toils the sole recompense of torture, persecution, and imprisonment, quenched in misery and tears the light which God had kindled, and forced a man, as much greater than themselves as Chimborazo is above an ant-hill, to die with the despairing utterance that men were not worth striving for. Heaven's great are constantly slandered by earth's little. The world sends its chosen jury into the witness box, and, while rogues get on exceedingly well with them, what chance have



Christian and Faithful? "The man is a heretic," says Mr. Blindman. "Away with such a fellow," says Mr. Nogood. "Ay," said Mr. Malice, "for I hate the very looks of him." Then said Mr. Lovelust, "I never could endure him." "Nor I," said Mr. Liveloose, "for he would always be condemning my way." "Hang him, hang him!" said Mr. Ready. "A sorry scrub," said Mr. Highmind. "My heart riseth against him," said Mr. Emnity. "He is a rogue," said Mr. Liar. Then said Mr. Implacable, "Let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death." And all these sad and bitter experiences are summed up in the *De profundis* of our greatest English intellect, shocked at man's perversions amid God's holy order: "Tired with all these for restful death I cry."

5. And yet, my friends, in spite of this weight of authority and evidence, it would be fatal to us; fatal to the hope by which we are saved, and which is as a vernal breeze amid poisonous fogs; fatal to the glad enthusiasm which leaps up like a fountain amid the briny waves and corrupted currents of the world; fatal to the spring and elasticity of all regenerative efforts for mankind, if we should come to despise or despair of either ourselves or our brother man. In spite of all these facts and this evidence we would say with a living writer: "I trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of

its faculties, in the fulness of its mercy, in the joy of its love." The Roman Senate never did a nobler act, than when, after the stupendous defeat of Cannæ, they went out to meet and thank the defeated general, because he had not despaired of the Republic. Even so should all humanity thank the humble martyrs, the obscure benefactors, the unfamous faithful, who, amid toil and obloquy, defrauded of justice, hopeless of reward, deluged with ingratitude, have yet believed in the redeemableness of their brother men. They teach us to look to humanity in its ideal, not in its degradation; in its angelhood, not in its pollution. Even in the vilest they see, as Christian saw, the living soul. They judge of manhood by its saints and heroes, not at all by its "men-slugs and human serpentry." Surely we too have seen, and not so rarely, the light of pure love on human faces, the bloom of modesty, the glow of sympathy. If I want to know what a rose is, I do not judge it by some withering and cankered specimen, with the aphides crawling over its decay, and the worm gnawing at its root; and, if I want to see what man is, I do not judge him by the pale and blighted victim of his own basest appetites, I do not look for him in the squalid youths who loaf and smoke at the doors of the ginshop. I as little judge of men by the liar and the debauchee, as of

women by the slattern or the harlot. Ah God! what could we think of humanity if we had no specimens but these to judge by? No! but I judge of men and women in the ideal of what they might be; in the pure and good, when I see them walking in the light of the Lord;—yes, and we may judge them by all that is purest and best in our own hearts, if so be that there is aught in them of good or pure.

6. "Honour all men!" Has it never struck you how marvellous is the fact that words so noble, so far-reaching, should be quite casually uttered by this poor Jew—this Galilean fisherman—unlearned, ignorant, "new from his fishing-boat, and with his clothes all wringing wet," and writing only to handfuls of slaves and artisans? Strange that, in the most incidental way, he should utter a rule which shows deeper wisdom than that of the greatest philosophers and the keenest nations of the world! Look at the brilliant Greeks: they despised all the rest of the world but themselves as natural barbarians. Look at the Romans: it was regarded as a piece of exceptional nobleness when Seneca pleaded that slaves after all were men like ourselves. Look at the Jews: they scornfully repudiated the whole Gentile world. Look at the classes which were regarded as most religious and enlightened: the Priests and Pharisees, thinking that all salvation lay in their rituals and phylac-

teries, said, "This multitude, that knoweth not the law, are accursed." Look at Voltaire and his fellow Encyclopædists, talking of the many as "the canaille," and describing them as a mixture of bears and apes. But here is the poor Galilean peasant—nobler than the haughtiest votaries of all these religions and all these philosophies—who, in words of lofty teaching, rebukes them all, puts them all to the blush, and, scourged as he had been, and hated, and buffeted, doomed to die at last by some hideous death—so far from swerving in disgust or in despair from his great divine ideal—yet says, with magnificent conviction, of the race against which his whole life was a struggle—of the race whose rulers were a Herod, a Nero, a Caiaphas—and among whom he had seen a Judas and a Simon Magus—"Honour all men!"

7. "Honour all men!" Had that rule been followed, what a different world should we have seen in the past! Every great crime of governments and of nations has been a crime against the inherent rights of the human race. Slavery, with its corruptions and cruelties; despotism, trampling on helpless populations; priestcraft, usurping man's indefeasible privilege of immediate access to God; inquisitors, fettering the inherent and eternal freedom of human souls; conquerors, leading myriads of human beings to be slaughtered at their will—have but com-

mitted these crimes because they honoured, not men, but only their own boundless pride and brutal selfishness. Ah! how different had history been if Pharisees, and Priests, and Kings had recognized that "mankind has a nobler destiny than to be made the footstool of a few families;" that "we are one great brotherhood with one great object, the free development of our spiritual nature;" that "mankind has but one single aim, mankind itself; and that aim but one single instrument, mankind again." And if St. Peter's rule were followed now, how different a world should we see in the present! Do we never break it? Do we not see it broken every day and in every manner? Walk into some shameful thoroughfare at night, and in those pale diseased faces under the gaslight, in that awful heartbroken multitude of the fallen—estimate the deadliness of the crime of those who sin against God's image and destroy His living temples! In lowering the humanity of others, and their own, to the level of their own vilest appetites, do they not sin most grievously against the majestic sacredness of that nature for which Christ died? Look at the drunkard in his degradation—so inexpressibly foolish in one phase of his self-destruction, in another so inexpressibly brutal. Look again at the bitterness of controversy, both political and religious, which sticks at no falsity in the one

base desire to injure an opponent. What right have men who know the holy dignity of manhood to disgrace it by using such weapons? This sort of invective may have its charm for base readers and base writers, but I would say of it,

He had never kindly heart,  
Nor ever cared to better his own kind,  
Who first wrote satire with no pity in it.

Men pity those who are subject to it. I rather pity those who are guilty of it. Let me give you an instance. This age has seen no man more courageously upright than Abraham Lincoln, the martyred President of America, who saved that mighty nation from its worst stain of slavery. Yet he was assailed so savagely by the blind and brutal malice of partisans, that, after reading one of the shameful attacks upon him, he is recorded to have said—"Well, Abraham Lincoln, are you a man, or are you a dog?" Could men stab each other thus blindly and furiously in the dark, if they had admitted into their minds the least glimpse of those high truths which filled the soul of St. Peter, when he wrote to those poor and humble Christians—hated and persecuted as they were—"Honour all men"?

8. I have no time to enter further on this high rule, which, as it precludes some of the deadliest crimes against humanity, so binds us to some of

our loveliest duties. The spirit of the rule might help us to renounce alike great sins and little vices. Only, in conclusion, let me beg you not merely to hear this rule, but to study it; not only to walk away with trivial criticisms of a sermon, but to walk away with deeper desire to be true to a divine law of life.

“Honour all men!”—their inherent dignity, the infinite possibilities of their nature, their freedom of conscience, the awful price of their redemption, their immediate accountability to God. While this honour leads us to deep reverence for all human goodness, let it inspire us also with such hope and compassion, as shall feel none to be too low, too fallen for our pity or our help. “Honour all men”—and we cannot then be guilty of the contempt which is the ill-humour of egotism; the ill-manners which spring from selfishness; the offensive patronage which is a mark of vanity; the churlishness which comes of savagery and pride. I know men—men of high distinction—whose manners could only be described as surly and churlish. One might call them able men; but no one, without gross flattery, could call them gentlemen. For they know nothing whatever of gentle deeds. And this true honour for man’s nature would affect not our action only but our speech. It will save us from all those thousands of forms of sin against Christ’s new command-

ment, against God's eternal law of love, by virtue of which still, as in the past,

Man is to man the sorest surest ill.

We can learn all this best by looking at Christ. Let us see humanity in Him, and it will be indeed transfigured with heavenly lustre. We can learn the lesson best at His table—for the Lord's Supper is a Communion, a Holy Communion, a Communion with these and with one another in Him; and if we meet there, in true and humble brotherhood, we may carry thence such lessons as shall make our lives nobler, sweeter, more according to the measure of a man, by breathing into all our dealings with one another that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, which are the fruits of the Spirit, and against which there is no law.



## XVII.

### Counsels to the Defeated.

“Be not deceived ; God is not mocked.”—GAL. vi. 7.

“Fear not.”—LUKE ii. 10.



WE have been dwelling for the last two Sundays on the subject of effort against sin—the struggle with the lion-monsters of wickedness, both in the world and in our own hearts. But there are many whose temptation it has become to say, It is useless to talk to me of effort ; effort for me is vain. I have been fighting against sin all my life, and it has all been to no purpose. In spite of the best that I could do, I am a defeated man. If ever there was a time in innocent childhood, in bright youth, when I might have strangled the lion of temptation, that day is past for me. Now I am “tied and bound with the chain of my sins.” Now you might as well bid the worm throw off the rock which is crushing it, as bid me throw off my burden. Sin has become a part of myself ; a law of my being.

The voice of conscience, which once spoke to me in thunder has died into a far off echo ; and the voice of sin, once but a low soft seductive whisper, now tyrannously promulgates, now indelibly writes upon my heart, the fatal decalogue of passion. If he who breaks one commandment is guilty of all, then to me, as to Israel of old, the law of holiness, written with the finger of God, lies shattered in a thousand fragments, like those granite tables which Moses dashed down on the mountain rock.

The common experience of life shows how sad is the prevalence of such moral despair. Under the spell of sin, benumbed by its torpedo-touch, men who began as Christians, end as fatalists. Their secret "I will not," becomes an imaginary "I cannot." Because they have not won the battle of life against evil tempers, against wicked habits, against unholy thoughts, they lie stricken, helpless, unstruggling, like the impotent man by the Pool of Bethesda ; and year after year, they make no effort more. And since they have made up their minds that whenever the temptation returns they shall fall into the same sin—since they are sinking lower and lower, and know that they are so sinking, doing wrong and hating themselves for it, and yet doing it—the very powers of evil, as though secure of their ruined and wasted lives, are content to let them alone. The hour to torment the victim has not yet

come. The angels of our life turn from us with weeping eyes, and exclaim, "Ephraim is turned to idols, let him alone!"

1. Now this common state of mind is a state of the extremest peril, and is sure, sooner or later, to become, by inevitable laws, a state of the extremest misery. If then there be any—as surely there are—in this condition here present, will they not naturally cry, "What message, what hope, what help, have you for us?"

2. My friends, the chief duty of the ministers of God is, that they should help their brethren to the best of their fallible knowledge and feeble power. When there is a spirit of repentance; when men truly seek the means of grace; when they have ceased to be insolent and defiant in sin; when they do intend—were it but ever so faintly—to lead a new life—then

Our commission is to heal, not harm;  
We come not to condemn, but reconcile;  
We come not to compel, but call again;  
We come not to destroy, but edify;  
Nor yet to question things already done;  
These are forgiven; matters of the past;  
And range with jetsam, and with offal, thrown  
Into the blind sea of forgetfulness.

But yet, in trying to carry out this commission, we must have an awful care not to say unto you smooth things, or prophesy deceits—not to go beyond what is commanded

us, to say either less or more. And though I do most humbly and most earnestly desire this day to help all those whose state is in any way such as I have described, there is more than one existing anodyne which I cannot and dare not use.

i. It need hardly be said, for instance, that I cannot adopt the views of the materialist, and tell you that you only appear to be but are not in reality responsible. Knowing well all that may be urged for the notion that we have only the semblance of free will; that the issues of our actions are in reality predetermined for us by heredity, by habit, by involuntary training, by the strength or weakness of surrounding influences; that our very thoughts are but physical changes in the grey substance of the brain; that we are elected beforehand by inevitable decrees to eternal grace or infinite reprobation; I sweep all such notions aside, and with equal indignation, whether they call themselves orthodoxy or atheism. If we are not free, then sin is no sin, and virtue is no virtue, and all life is an illusion, and all religion is a lie. If the doctrine of predestined reprobation be true, if materialism be true, if sin needs no excuse because it is due to automatic actions for which we are as little responsible as for the twitches produced by galvanism in some dead organism, or if sin be the result of irreversible decrees whereby we

were born into the world for a prearranged damnation—if sin be thus, on the one hand, a mere theologic fiction, or, on the other, a diabolical compulsion, then there is no more to be said, save that life itself becomes of necessity one huge misery and lie.

But on these points I need do no more than appeal to your own conscience and to your own experience. You *know* that you are free; you know that you once could, and that even now you can, eschew the evil and choose the good. On these heads it can hardly be necessary to say, at least to this congregation, “Be not deceived.”

ii. But it is I think far more probable that many of us may be deceiving ourselves with half efforts, with sham efforts, with efforts which we have ourselves secretly predetermined to failure, and that we are taking those half efforts for real efforts, and hoping that we shall persuade our God to so regard them. And if so I must say here very solemnly, “Be not deceived.” I cannot agree with what has been written by a deeply religious poet, who, after describing just such a life of constant failure, of habitual sin, as that to which we have been alluding, adds

The man, who, though his fights be all defeats,  
Still fights,  
Enters at last  
The heavenly Jerusalem's rejoicing streets,

With glory more, and more triumphant rites,  
 Than always-conquering Joshua, when his blast  
 The frightened walls of Jericho down-cast ;  
 And lo ! the glad surprise  
 Of joy beyond surmise  
 More than of common saints for ever in his eyes.

It is indeed true that in our struggles against the powers of evil in the outer world, a good man may again and again seem to be defeated. He may die on the scaffold or at the stake ; he may be hounded into the grave with the execration of his wicked, ignorant, or hypocritical contemporaries ; his very dust, like that of Wycliff, may be exhumed and scattered to the winds. But in the struggle with sin *within* us—in the contest with our own personal temptations—our fights, if they be fights, cannot all be defeats. He that committeth sin is the servant of sin ! There can be no communion of Christ with Belial, or participation of the Temple of God with idols. It is not enough when you have been guilty of a sin “merely to wet it with a tear and breathe upon it with a sigh,” and then go and do the same again. Unless a man has at least so far conquered sin that sin has ceased to have the dominion over him ; until his reason and his conscience, not his pride or his lusts, have the upper hand in the governance of his life, he cannot be saved. A man who is wholly mastered by, who is entirely helpless against the perpetual recurrence of a besetting sin, is in a state of

sin ; and "be not deceived," a state of sin is not and cannot be the same thing as a state of grace.

iii. Nor, again, can I adopt as a ground of comfort the views of a late learned theologian, who has laid vast stress on the possibilities of a death-bed forgiveness. "Take," says Dr. Pusey, "the worst case that can be imagined, a soul dying immediately upon the commission of some deadly sin. Take the case of one falling in a duel, but repenting for the love of God after he had been mortally wounded ; or of one who committed suicide and repented when the means employed began to work their effect ;" and then he mentions a still stranger and stronger case, which I dare not even repeat. No one, he continues, "can say that Ahab did not repent when 'stayed up in his chariot till even ;' or Absalom, when hanging between heaven and earth ; or the disobedient prophet, ere the lion met him ; or Herod, after being stricken with worms ; or Ananias, as he fell under Peter's words ; or the Anti-christ Antiochus ; or criminals on the scaffold. "What God does for the soul," he says, "when the eye is turned up in death and shrouded, the frame stiffened, every limb motionless, every power of expression gone, is one of the secrets of the divine compassion." Certainly it is, and I am not likely to argue against any suggestion which leans to the side of mercy, of love, of hope.

Let it be for others, not for me, to refute teaching as to what takes place in the moment which Dr. Pusey called "the almost-sacrament of death." And yet I should not be honest if I did not say that such teaching seems in more ways than one to go beyond the case of the dying thief upon the cross, the one and sole instance of repentance in the hour of death which Scripture records. But if any of you rely on this hope, or this chance, or this possibility, as an excuse for sin; if any of you secretly are saying to yourselves, "I will go on sinning now, I will repent before or when I die," I would say to you, briefly but most solemnly, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." When you wickedly think thus, you are mocking, you are insulting, you are defying God. You are, as it were, insolently bidding Him to wait your leisure; you are bidding Him to be content with the bitter lees of life after you have drained to the dregs what should have been its bright libation; to be content with the shrivelled and withered leaves, when you have cherished a canker in the worthless flowers.

If you rely on a death-bed repentance, you lean, I am convinced, upon a bruised and broken reed which will break beneath you, and run into your hand. I have seen death-beds, and I know that he who thinks he can make sure of a death-bed repentance, or even that mere semblance of



a death-bed repentance which we may call such, is hanging his whole weight upon the thread of a gossamer over a deep and dark abyss.

iv. Nor, again, can I give you any hope in a distinction which some have drawn between the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The words of our Lord, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," are meant for a solemn warning, but are used as a specious excuse. If any of you think that you may disintegrate your own individuality, and profess to be a saint in aspiration while you are a libertine in life, I can only warn you against drugging your conscience with the opiate of this fatal hypocrisy. Let us make every allowance for the awful effects of habit long indulged till it has become a second nature, habit which to the eye of man it may seem to be as impossible to change as for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots. Let us admit that, many times, sin, long after it has ceased to wear even the ghastliest semblance of pleasure, assumes the hideous guise of penal necessity. But if there be any solace for the agony of such thoughts, it rests, not in minimizing the guilt of habitual sins, but in the very depth of pity which they awaken in us, and in the conviction that our love and our pity and our sympathy can be but as a drop of the ocean compared with the infinite compassion of Him who became man to die for us. We leave

all the victims of sin which has passed into punishment, yea, we leave our own selves wholly and solely to the mercy of the Merciful. But we cannot and dare not say that a man can be so wholly two men in one, that with one part of his being he is dishonest or unclean and with the other upright and pure. Indeed, I think that such a view would tend to foster some of the most perilous forms of subtle self-deception,—that, for instance, which, having begun with horror at sin, ends with indifference about it ;—that which, having begun with “only this once,” ends with “Tush ! Thou, God, carest not for it ;” —that whereby a man takes himself, not for what he is, but for what he once meant to be, as though a drunkard he reeled out of a public-house should point to a faded piece of blue ribbon in proof of his character as a sober and temperate person. We are what we are in the concentration and sum total of our actions, and we shall be judged always, not by the one faithless minute or the many faithless protestations, but by the long course and tendency of life.

3. Against all such wilful delusions St. Paul utters his solemn “Be not deceived. God is not mocked.” The word for “mocked” implies the most unseemly and insulting gesture. And God is mocked when we pretend to be His while we cut our being in twain and give half to Satan, and when we draw nigh unto Him with our lips

while our heart is far from Him. When we are externally scrupulous, and inwardly filled with willing corruption; when we at once fast and smite with the fist of wickedness; when we say, "I go, sir," yet go not; when we try to combine the vile pleasure of sin with the perfect allegiance which God requires; when we say, "Lord, Lord," and do evil continually; what judgment have we any right to expect but "Thou hypocrite!"—what doom but "Depart from me, I never knew you!"

4. But though we cannot comfort you either by telling you that you are winning the victory, when, in fact, you are always defeated; nor by bidding you rely on death-bed agonies and hopes; nor by saying that you may serve sin with your body provided only that you serve righteousness with your spirit—have we, then, no hope, no counsel, no consolation for you? Do we address you in those utterly misinterpreted words of metaphor and irony, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still?" Not so, my brethren! But, instead of lulling your souls to sleep by perilous opiates, we call to you as you lie on the oblivious pool of acquiescence—

Awake! arise! or be for ever fallen!

i. For, first of all, if you really are fighting, be sure your fights will not all be defeats. If

they are, they are not real fights. When you are really fighting, it is because you desire to save your life from ruin, your soul from shipwreck. You will then watch over every day, because you feel how rapidly the dazzling wheels of the days are rolling you deathwards ; you will watch over every act, because you will see in every act a grain in the sand-multitude of influences, which alone can form a barrier against the turbid waves of your temptations. Before any of us fancy that, though fighting, we are always defeated by sin, let us ask whether it is the one dear absorbing wish of our souls to stand approved with God and not with men, and to be pure with God and our own pure souls? Let us not be deceived on the very threshold—deceived even as to the reality of our intentions ; for the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

ii. Then again, if we would know whether we are truly resisting sin, let us see whether we really fly from its approaches. Do you turn from it when you see it creeping up to you far off in the darkened thought or stealing upon you down the avenues of the senses? Do you draw your sword and stand firm when you see it glaring on you from the thicket ready for its crushing spring? When your temptation arises from evil companions, do you leave them and seek only the pure and good? When it springs

from evil books, do you burn them, or fling them away, with as much remorse and horror as those who burnt their bad books at Ephesus and at Florence? Above all, do we—remembering that we are not alone—that God sees us, that God is with us—do we always, in the hour of temptation, take refuge in prayer, calling as passionately on God to save and help us as sailors call on Him from the sinking vessel in the raging storm? Be sure that he who doeth these things shall never greatly fall.

iii. Once again—test your sincerity by the manner in which you control or resist your evil thoughts. Do you suffer your thoughts to tamper with evil, to dally with wrongdoing? If so you are not sincere. If you willingly sin in thought; if you are base and guilty there; the guilt and baseness will, sooner or later, break into the outlets of word and deed. From thought to wish, from wish to purpose, from purpose to word, from word to act, from act to habit; from delight in the imagination to consent in the will; from consent in the will to guilt in the deed; from guilty deed to repeated transgression—such is the genesis of sin; such the swift slope of the descent towards Avernus! He who in his thoughts parleys with sin, deliberates with it, indulges it, is guilty of it already in his heart; and when “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,” there burst forth also the black

stream of murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, malice, and all those other things of which Jesus spake. The tyrant Nero tried to degrade some of the great Roman nobles to as low a level as his own, by making them appear as actors in the arena on the stage. To disobey was death. Florus was bidden thus to appear, and, doubting whether to obey, consulted the virtuous and resolute Agrippinus. "Go, by all means," answered Agrippinus. "Well, but," replied Florus with astonishment, "you yourself refused to obey." "Yes," answered Agrippinus, "because I did not deliberate about it." The categorical imperative, the naked, absolute, prohibition of duty must be implicitly, unquestionably, instantly obeyed. To deliberate about it is to be a secret traitor; and the line which separates the secret traitor from the open rebel is thin as the spider's web.

iv. Then take another test—do you put off resistance, put off obedience, for even a little time? "The man who procrastinates," as says the ancient poet, "wrestles ever with ruin." If you suffer yourself willingly to be worsted now, you will be so worsted again and again, until at last you blunt the sense of wrongdoing, suppress the blushing mutiny of conscience, and sink so low as to defend your own guiltiness. Do not think that you can put off with impunity, or till the end. There is an awful truth, if there be much quaintness, in the language of one who said:

"My lord, Heaven is not to be won by short hard work at the last, as some of us take a degree at the university after much irregularity and negligence. . . . I have known many old playfellows of the devil spring up suddenly from their death-beds and strike at him treacherously; while he, without returning the cuff, only laughed and made grimaces in the corner of the room."

v. And, lastly, lest any be discouraged, let me say that to promise you the certain ultimate victory is not the same thing as saying that you will never fall. By reason of the frailty of our mortal nature we cannot always stand upright; but if we be true fighters, when we fall we shall not lie in the mire, but instantly—shamed into greater watchfulness—we shall make more sure of the next victory; and each victory will lead to others, until our enemy is utterly routed. Do you determine, for instance, to conquer anger? Number, then, the days in which you have not been in a rage; I used to be angry every day, now it is only every third or fourth day. But if you should pass even thirty days without a relapse, and should restrain yourself under many provocations, then sing a *Te Deum* unto God. For then the habit, which is being loosened, will soon be eradicated, and you will be an Olympic victor, not over miserable boxers and athletes, but over the dead-

—had given his whole life to God. Among other legends of his favour with God and man, we are especially struck by one beautiful and marvellous story. In his closing years, at a solemn moment of his life, he had retired to Monte Alverno, a wild and desolate hill near the source of the Tiber ; and there, at Easter-tide, among the sombre groves, with prayer and with penitence, in anguish and in ecstasy, amid the gloomy hush of noonday and the solemn sounds of night, he had absorbed his whole soul in thoughts of his Saviour Christ. In those hours he dwelt upon the death and passion of the Lord Jesus as only one who was a Southron and a mystic could imagine it, with a heart aflame with gratitude and love. And as he fed upon these pathetic, these ennobling thoughts, the power of imagination was so intensified that the boundaries of the spiritual and the unseen in some way melted into those of the material and the visible ; heavenly visions floated around him, glittering faces seemed to brighten the noonday, strange voices rang through the midnight woods ; until at last, in the awful crisis of his rapture and his agony, he saw, or thought he saw, a seraph before him with six wings—"with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly"—and in the midst of the many-coloured radiance a



figure of indescribable beauty with arms outstretched upon the cross. And while he gazed in overwhelming trance upon the solemn and splendid vision, there seemed to occur to him on that lonely hill a silent transfiguration of his human soul. Gradually, he knew not how, there appeared, or seemed to appear, in his own hands and feet the marks of nails, and in his side the broad wound as of a lance; and, when he came to himself, when the ecstasy was over, when the aching glory ceased to overshadow him, he found that he bore on his body, whether unconsciously self-inflicted, or in whatever other way they came, the *stigmata*, the marks, the five wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Into the evidences of this story, into the psychology of it, into its possible connexion with morbid and dimly understood phenomena, I shall not enter. St. Francis was very far from showing, or boasting of these marks, these stigmata, of the Lord Jesus. The deepest feelings of religion grow, like the lily of the valley, in shadowy and lonely places. To any one who knows, even afar off, the sensitive delicacy of the shrinking soul, and the impossibility which it feels of revealing, or even expressing, its deepest experiences, it will not seem strange that he concealed to the utmost this dread visitation, whatever it may have

been. He would have shuddered at the thought of vulgarizing it, he kept it, to the very utmost of his power, as a holy and awful secret between himself and God. Even those intimate friends who knew and loved him, and who, within three years of his death, narrate the story, dwell but little on the wonder. How was this? Partly because in those ages such events were thought far less extraordinary than now they would be ; but chiefly because the life, the character, the example of Francis, as the founder of their great monastic order, seemed to the mediæval church a thing more admirable than any miracle. On the wild hills and plains of Umbria, Francis, according to his lights, according to the views of his day, showing himself absolutely faithful to the best he knew, tried to reproduce the life of Jesus in Galilee. There were in the character, in the heart, if not upon the hands and feet, of Francis of Assisi, marks more miraculous, stigmata more indisputable, traces of direct communion with God, and intimate connexion with his Saviour Christ, far more authentic—the toils, the sufferings, the voluntary poverty, the stainless chastity, the entire obedience, the active service, the intense self-denial, of one of the saintliest and loveliest souls of all those who, since He died upon the cross, have walked in the steps of their Saviour Christ.

3. Now the marks, the stigmata of Christ, by which I mean the veritable, the spiritual stigmata which should be visible on the life of every Christian, are twofold : the marks of self-denial meekly borne in His service ; the marks of victory over temptation won by His redeeming love. Those are the stigmata referred to in this text ; they were marks borne by one who was incomparably greater in intellectual power than the humble enthusiast of Italy—even the Apostle of the Gentiles. This letter of his to the churches of Galatia was written amid a storm of deep feeling, and the agitation of the writer is shown in the tumult of the style. Those rude converts, for whom Paul had toiled so long and whom he loved so tenderly, abandoning his teaching, slighting his authority, had succumbed to the malignant fascination of other teachers. Wounded in his tenderest sensibilities by their ingratitude, he once more sketched for them, in burning outline, the truths which he had taught, and then concludes his epistle with a few words of affection. "See," he says, "the large straggling letters in which my infirmity has forced me to write to you." Suffering from weak eyesight, perhaps the result of the vision which had outdazzled the noonday sun on the road to Damascus, he was generally obliged to ask the help of an amanuensis. "But see," he says, "to you alone of my

converts I have, with my own hand, toilfully scrawled this intense and sorrowful epistle. You have driven me to the distasteful task of exposing false pretensions. You have driven me to the painful duty of self-defence and apparent boasting. Let it be enough, my children. I long for peace ; I am suffering ; I am oppressed ; I am not far from the Great White Throne. From henceforth let no man trouble me : for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

4. It is evident that St. Paul, like Francis of Assisi on Monte Alverno, had recently passed through some terrible and heart-shaking crisis of a career pre-eminent in overwhelming trials. To be insulted and hated ; to be treated as a person at once dangerous and untrue ; to be misrepresented by every party in the church alike ; to be set forth, as in some great amphitheatre of suffering, a spectacle to angels and to men ; this alas ! amid the contempt of Gentiles and the rage of Jews, was a normal condition of his life. To him too, as to all the true saints of God, came all his life long the beatitude of malediction. But at this period there had been some special agony. He wrote to the Corinthians that he was in jeopardy every hour ; he was dying daily ; he has fought with beasts at Ephesus ; he was carrying about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus. What

was it? Was it some fresh paroxysm of the thorn in the flesh? some recent agony from the bruises of Roman rods, or the lash of Jewish thongs? some fracture from the stoning at Lystra? some weakness from the triple shipwrecks? some trace of the burning of Sirius or the fury of Euraquilo? Whatever it was, this new pang in the monotony of misery, this fresh martyr-wound in the martyr-life, how does St. Paul bear it? Poor sufferer, with his passionate heart, his humiliated presence, his trembling susceptibility, his stammering speech—so far from murmuring at it, he accepts, he even glories in it as the seal of his embassy and credential of his Apostolate, a stigma of his Lord. By that indisputable sign Christ is his conqueror, his captain, his master; he is Christ's prisoner, His slave, His soldier now! A slave in Rome or Ephesus might blush to be called *stigmatias*—the branded chattel of an earthly owner; but Paul is proud of a service which is perfect freedom; and in his next epistle he calls himself for the first time, δοῦλος Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, a slave of Jesus Christ. "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear—βαστάζω—I bear like a trophy, branded upon my body, the marks of the Lord Jesus!"

5. My brethren, let us humbly admit that many of St. Paul's expressions which have passed into the current phraseology of Christian

life—to “die daily,” to “be crucified with Christ,” to “carry about the dying,” to “bear the marks” of the Lord Jesus—often as they are repeated, have become on our lips grievously conventional. In the case of all but a very few, do we not feel that they have a false ring about them? On the cross itself, which once caused a shudder in the hearts of men, the world has laid its chilly and vulgarizing touch. It has been degraded from a thrilling symbol into a pretty ornament. On the forehead of every one of us in infancy the cross was signed. Alas! how much of the meaning of that cross, except in the way of involuntary trials, of deserved punishments, does that symbol represent to us? How much in the way of penitence, in the way of devotion, in the way of self-denial? How much have we shown of the sensibility of innocence, the enthusiasm of unselfishness, the passion of self-sacrifice? How often have we illustrated the noble desire to be poor, and to descend? How often have we displayed the glorious readiness to spend and to be spent in other causes than that of self? How many of us can say with the Apostles, “Lo! we have forsaken all and followed Thee”? Ought the Christian life to be so easily harmonized as we harmonize it with luxury, with eager worldliness, with murmuring ambition, with greed, with malice, with lack of

charity, with love of self? Ought the Christian warfare to be, as it so often is, little more than a comfortable profession of languid virtues; a thin veneer of conventional respectabilities; a hypocritical semblance of dead, or at least of inoperative, of ineffectual, of passively received beliefs? Death, judgment, eternity—how many of us live with these habitually in view? To eat, and drink, and sleep, to accumulate, to laugh, to die, with no thought of a besetting God, with no shame for our unworthiness, no bitter penitence for sin, no serious effort for amendment, no thrill of gratitude to Christ, no solemn looking forth to heaven:—does this describe the life of any of us? and if it does—oh, is this the life on which has fallen the shadow of the cross?

6. Ah, my friends, how very different our lives, our aims, our interests would look if, for one single hour, we could see them as we shall see them when, a few years hence, we lie on the bed of death! Which shall we think most of then? our successes, our accumulations, the bitter things we have written, the sharp things we have said, or any good deed, were it ever so humble, which by God's grace, we haply may have tried to do? "O God, deal not with us after our sins, neither reward us according to our iniquities!" Oh, recognize us for Thine own, even if it be but as the last

and lowest of Thine own. Oh, say not to us, "Ye have said, Lord, Lord ; ye have prophesied in My name, but I never knew you. Ye have professed to love Me, but ye have not kept My commandments. Ye have not done the things which I said." Ah ! Lord it is true. "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and done those things which we ought not to have done." Saints we are not, heroic we are not, not even magnanimous ; scarcely even dare we claim the humblest meaning of the word Christian, still less that we are the sons of God. Yet something—something not quite despicable, not wholly ignoble, by Thy grace we may have been, or yet may be. No branch of palm, no crown of amaranth, no chariot of fire for us ; but oh, write upon us Thy new name, and renew upon our foreheads Thy half-obliterated baptismal cross !

But, my friends, if we indeed desire this there is one indispensable condition. There cannot be on the same brow the marks of the Lord Jesus, and the stigmata of Satan's serfdom ; not on the same forehead the Cross of Christ, and the brand of Cain. If on the foreheads of God's saints we read, written in the hieroglyphics of Heaven, the name of the Almighty, so do we not see the stigmata of Satan on many a darkened countenance, in



many a deeply-troubled glance? "Think not," says the young Angel in the "Paradise Lost," to the fallen spirit whom he had failed to recognize, because his old Archangelic lustre was now visibly impaired—

"Think not, revolted spirit, thy shape the same  
Or undiminished brightness, to be known  
As when thou stood'st in heaven, upright and pure,  
That glory, then, when thou no more wast good  
Departed from thee, and thou resemblest now  
Thy sin, and place of doom, obscure and foul."

So spake the cherub, and his grave rebuke,  
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace  
Invincible; abashed the Devil stood  
And felt how awful goodness is, and Virtue  
In her own shape how lovely;—saw and pined  
His loss, but mostly to find here observed  
His lustre visibly impaired.

It is the case with all sin that it mars those mortal bodies which are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Intemperance, envy, discontent, impurity do brand the souls of men, each with its own several mark, as bond slaves of the powers of evil. And most of all is this the case with all willing, with all habitual sins. And think not that the marks of Satan can be always, can be effectually concealed. Concealed they cannot be from the all-seeing eye of God; concealed they may be for a time from the eyes of men, but even that not certainly, and rarely all the life long. "Hark in your ear,"

says the strange character in a work of genius, "when the Black Man has put his mark upon any one, and seest him so shy of acknowledging the bond, he has an awkward way of producing their sign-manual, and making them confess even before the eyes of men that they have secretly belonged to him." When, in the great poem of the Middle Ages, Dante leaves the mirk of the abyss, and struggles upward to the mountain of Purgatory, he has to pass up the steps of sincerity, of contrition, and of self-sacrifice to the diamond threshold of forgiveness, and as he enters the narrow wicket gate the Angel of Repentance marks the letter P (for *peccatum*, sin) seven times upon his forehead, one letter for each one of the seven deadly sins, and he cannot enter Paradise till each one of those fatal letters has been brushed away.

But whether there be on the sinner any external signs of his sin or not, each man has his own *character*; that which, as the very word implies, is engraved upon him—the image which God sees upon the coin—the superscription which God reads upon the soul. Oh, my brethren, let us strive with all our energy that, upon the souls of every one of us, we may bear the marks of the Lord Jesus, visible to His tenderness, however faint to the eye of man. He will rejoice to decipher were it but the dimmest traces of His likeness, be they never

so marred and blurred. But every day we may make them more and more distinct. Wherever there is any form of self-conquest, sternly achieved, for conscience sake—there is one of the marks of Jesus. Is there one here, who, being naturally proud, has schooled himself to the sweet virtue of humility in love of Christ? Is there one here, who having been prone to passion and sarcasm, has yet tutored his lips to gentleness and his heart to calm? Is there one who, being of a jealous and envious spirit, has grown to rejoice honestly at the success, not only of his rivals, but even of his inferiors? Is there one who, being full of earthly ambition, has learnt of Him who refused all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, that there is no noble ambition save that of eminently serving God? Is there one who, having been indolent and self-indulgent, has learnt "the dignity of work, the innocence of work, the holiness of work, the happiness of work," for God and man? Is there one, the fountain of whose life has been polluted by evil thoughts and evil words and evil deeds, but who, by earnest prayer for the grace of God, and noble effort to mortify within him every corrupting passion, has striven to purify himself even as God is pure, and so once more to see the face of His Father, unobscured by the rank mists which reek upwards from the sin-polluted

heart?—then there—even if there have been no bitter sorrow, no rending conflict—there, even upon that soul, are marks—marks, however faint, of the Lord Jesus. And this is not beyond the strength of any one of us—not even of the most fallen. He who received publicans and sinners, and ate with them ; He who touched the leper and made him clean ; He who cast seven devils out of the soul of the Magdalene ; He who suffered the woman who was a sinner to wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head ; He who even to the miserable, dishevelled, shamed adulteress, said, as she lay sobbing upon the Temple floor amid her tangled hair, “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more”—He, most surely, will receive us. Does He not again and again invite us ? Does He not say, “I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel” ? Did He not cry, “Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” ? “It is the helpless who feel themselves helpless whom God specially invites to come to Him, and to whom He offers all the riches of His salvation ; not forgiveness only—forgiveness would be worth little if it left us under the power of our early passions—not forgiveness only, but strength ; that strength that enables us to conquer sin.” Know ye not that “the

Son of Man hath power even on earth to forgive sins"?

In this faith—in this quietness of humble but perfect confidence—let us come to God in Christ, and let us say, "Faint are Thy marks which we bear upon us. Punishment we have deserved; we deny it not. But oh! we will try to do our duty, try to leave the world a little better than we found it. Accept, O Lord, such imperfect service as Thou didst inspire, for the sake of the one perfect self-sacrifice which Thou didst fulfil. Pardon our sins out of Thine own boundless pity. Read Thy marks upon us, or if they be obliterated, do Thou of Thy mercy renew them; and may our names be found written in Thy Book of Life, even though we stand lowest and last upon its list!"

Oh! with all the energies of an immortal life, let us strive that ere we die we too may bear on our souls at least *these* marks of the Lord Jesus—bear them at least in virtues won, in faults corrected, in sins repented of. All sins committed leave their own scar on earth, even after the wound is healed; but when, after prayer and penitence, sins have been forgiven through the atoning blood of Christ, then the very scars they leave are—as Bossuet said of the wounds of the immortal Condé—"Proofs of the protection of heaven." If we can take with us no saintly self-

denials, no noble services, no rich spiritual gifts, when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, let us at least take the traces of wounds which His grace has closed : proofs of recovery ; scars touched into healing by His hand of love. It was for this—it was for the forgiveness of sins—that Christ died and rose again, and ever liveth to make intercession for us ; and these, even these, shall be marks of the Lord Jesus in such as we.

## XX.

### The True Glory of Humanity.

A CHRISTMAS MORNING SERMON.

“The Word was made flesh.”—JOHN i. 14.



ON this morning there can be but one subject for us, the birth of Christ. Of that birth there are two aspects. It is an event in time ; it is a revelation of eternity. It is a fact of history ; it is a doctrine of religion. As an event it is more stupendous than any in history ; as a revelation it is more blessed than any in Scripture.

It is a fact pathetic beyond description ; a faith rich in illimitable blessedness.

1. What is the fact ? The lessons of to-day bring it home to us in manifold aspects. A Roman emperor had decreed that the Jews should enrol themselves. In obedience to that decree a poor carpenter of Nazareth, of the fallen line of David, made his way to Bethlehem, with Mary, his betrothed wife, then travailing with a divine birth. Through the darkness of that

wintry night they toiled up the hill of Bethlehem, and since there was no room for them at the inn, she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger. All was silent in the world of nature; all was indifferent in the world of man. No eclipse or earthquake, no cataclysm or conflagration heralded the greatest birth of Time. Herod recked not of it in his neighbouring palace, nor Augustus at Rome, nor Caiaphas in Jerusalem, nor Priests nor Pharisees amid their minutiae of outward service. Only the angels could not contain their joy; only to the poor shepherds the heavens burst to disclose their light, and, for one moment, through the midnight the glory flashed and the melody brimmed over the crystal firmament. I have stood in that cave of Bethlehem and seen the silver star let into the marble floor where, under an ever-burning lamp, runs the inscription, "*Hic e Virgine Maria Christus natus est*" (Here of the Virgin Mary Christ was born). He who stands there stands at the watershed of human history. It is from thence that the streams of all the past flow into their dark backwards; from thence the rivers of the future stream down rejoicing to meet the eternal light.

2. The NATIVITY, that is the fact. The INCARNATION, that is the doctrine and the mystery. The birth of a little babe in the stable of the



humble inn, there is the event. The Word became flesh ;

The Lord of Time and all the worlds  
Came to us once a naked new-born child ;—

that little babe laid in the manger, He is the King of Kings—there is the mystery. To you I need not stop to prove it ; to you it is self-attested ; you know it ; you believe it ; many of you, I trust, have learnt the truth of it by blessed experience ; you have the witness in yourselves.

3. God became man. Is not that cause enough for Christmas gladness, for a joy as of the angels, for a joy ten times more glad and living than we can ever feel ? He took not on Him the nature of angels, yet the angels thrilled with tumults of joy at the thoughts of millions of sinners who would repent. What would our joy be if, with their larger other eyes, we could see all that was signified by the birth of Christ ? The mystery, indeed, we cannot fathom. Of that we say, “I will seek to believe rather than to reason ; to adore rather than to explain ; to give thanks rather than to penetrate ; to love rather than to know ; to humble myself rather than to speak.” But believing it—and oh, that we may strive to believe it, not with orthodox assent, but with personal realization !—which of the thousand lessons which it involves shall we try to take to our hearts to-day ?

4. Through the fact, through the mystery, through all the life and teaching of our Lord there is one lesson, which, if we could but grasp it, would be a lifelong source of strength, of purity, of ennobling peace. On that lesson I will speak my few words to-day. It is the grandeur of that human nature which God has given us ; the sacredness, the majesty, the lofty privileges, the immeasurable possibilities of man.

5. It is a revelation altogether new. Look at man in the light of Nature. We look upwards, and, seeing the galaxies of stars, the myriads of planets and moons and suns and systems, our nothingness is burnt into us and we are tempted to think of ourselves as infinitesimal atoms, the creatures of a passing moment, the prey of blind forces in the blinding whirl of chance.

We look downwards, and seeing the earth wrinkled with her innumerable graves, "dead species, dead genera, dead generations, dead epochs, a universe of death"—the very dust of the world made of the decay of unnumbered organisms—we are tempted to believe that nothing remains for us but dust to dust, that the grave is the universal end, and the worm the universal conqueror.

We look around, and seeing the vanity and vileness of mankind, seeing races wholly given up to various idolatries, seeing that the dark places

of the earth are the habitations of cruelty, seeing man savage and man civilized alike abandoning himself to passions of dishonour, and given over to the lowest instincts we are tempted to despise our being. We turn to communities nominally Christian, and we see them tainted by greed, given over to lies, besotted by drink, the bond-slaves of base and brutal appetites. We turn to biography, and it is chiefly a record of human sorrows ; to history, and it tells of ages of crime and error ; to the poets, and their songs are full of sadness and despondency.

And when we dwell on all this, and look each at the plague of our own hearts, we blush for ourselves, we blush for our race, we say that, "however we brazen it out, we men are a little breed." It is such thoughts that drive men into the devil's gospel of despair and materialism ; it is from the exclusive contemplation of man in his lowest nature that many are led to say so wearily that life is not worth living ; that it is—

A life of nothings, nothing worth  
From that first nothing at our birth  
To that last nothing under earth.

6. Now turn from the shadow, face the sun ! Turn away your eyes from the phenomena of evil and ruin, and look at the manger-cradle of Bethlehem. Look at man in the light of the Incarnation, and see how all is changed ! The

Jesus, who is Christ the Lord, was the perfect man, the representative man, man in the image of God, God as a man with men; God not merely revealing Himself to man, not merely uniting himself to man, but God *becoming* man. We do not judge of the tree from the blighted trunk, the cankered leaves, the bitter roots—but from its glory of foliage, of blossom, and of fruit. We do not estimate the ship from the miserable wreck which the rocks have gored, and the waves shattered, and the winds flung in scorn upon the shore—but from the gallant barque, when, with streaming flag and bellying sails, “she walks the waters like a thing of life.” Even so we must take our estimate of man, not from the churl and the villain, not from the liar and the scoundrel, not from the selfish miser and the staggering drunkard, not from the indolence of the slothful and the wretchedness of the depraved; not from the harlot and the felon, and those yet more guilty, who made them what they are—but from the pure, the good, the spiritually-minded. These alone are true men and true women; the others are but the blight of men and women, the wrecks of what once were, or what once should have been, those gracious things. In the light from Bethlehem’s cradle we see man not as he too often is, but as he may be, as we trust that he yet will be. We see his darkness dispelled by a divine light, his nature

transfigured with an illumination not of earth. St. Anselm wrote a famous book with the title, "Cur Deus Homo?" ("Why did God become Man?") And one answer at least to that question is to teach us that "we are greater than we know." God became man that man might become as God; that he might be a little higher than the angels, instead of a little lower than the brutes.

And in the light of this truth we escape from that snare of the devil which would lead us to despise our human nature. We say, "I trust in the nobleness of human nature, in the majesty of its faculties, in the fulness of its mercy, in the joy of its love."

7. And, ah! my friends, do not regard this as a mere vague trust, a mere abstract speculation. It is a belief which may affect every day of our lives, in the twofold blessedness of duty and of love. It affects our estimate of ourselves; affects our conduct to others. There is not one degradation of our personal being which does not spring from lack of self-reverence,—of reverence for ourselves as those whom Christ has redeemed, to whom He has given a right to be children of God. The Incarnation teaches us that our part is in Christ, our bodies His temple, our nature His image, our hearts His shrine. He that takes a mean estimate of his own being, he who regards himself as akin only

to the beasts that perish, and destined to no higher end than they, will live as they do. He who looks on himself as immortal, as a child of God, as partaker of the nature which Christ wore and Christ redeemed, he will hold himself ever more and more bounden to aim at a noble and godly life.

Thus, then, the Incarnation, rightly apprehended, becomes the basis of all noble conceptions of our human life.

In the light of the Son of God becoming flesh, we dare not degrade or disesteem ourselves. We see how base an apostasy it is to abnegate the divine prerogative of our being. The birth of Christ becomes to us the pledge of immortality, the inspiration of glad, unerring, life-long duty to ourselves. And no less does it bring home to us the new commandment of love to our brethren. It becomes the main reason why we should love one another. If men were indeed what Satan makes them, and makes us try to believe that they solely are—hopelessly degraded, unimaginably vile; if human life be nothing at the best but the shadow of a passing and miserable dream, I know not how we could love one another. We could only turn with loathing from all the vice and canker, the mortal corruption, the manifold baseness of many lives. How is all transfigured, how is the poorest wretch earth ever bore transfigured,

when we remember that for these Christ became man, for these He died ! Shall we, ourselves so weak, so imperfect, so stained with evil, shall we dare to despise these whom Christ so loved that for them—yea, for these blind and impotent men these publicans and sinners, these ragged prodigals of humanity still voluntarily lingering among their husks and swine—for these, even for these, He, so pure, so perfect, took our nature upon Him, and went, step by step, down all that infinite descent ? Despise them ? Ah ! the revealing light of the God-man shows too much darkness in ourselves to leave any possibility for pride. We take our own seats among the lepers on the Temple steps ; prostrate with them we stretch blind hands of faith and prayer to God. “We are all equally guilty, we are all equally redeemed.” Standing beside the cradle of the Lord all humanity becomes precious, becomes immortal. It becomes to us a sacred and blessed duty to pity the afflicted, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to comfort the sick, to bring home the wanderers, to undo the heavy burden and let the oppressed go free. If even Christian men saw this duty they would not live as so many of them do. But if we have learnt the lesson of Christmas, the lesson of Bethlehem, let us live to counteract the works of the devil ; let it be the one aim of our lives to love and not to hate ; to help, not to hinder ; to succour

them that are tempted, not to add to and multiply their temptations ; to make men better, not worse ; to make life a little happier, not more deeply miserable ; to speak kindly words, not all words that may do hurt ; to console and to encourage, not to blister and envenom weak and suffering souls ; to live for others, not for ourselves ; to look each of us not on his own things, but on the things of others ; to think noble thoughts of man as well as of God ; to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us.

My friends, let this central lesson suffice for us to-day. Is it not high enough ? Is it not pure enough ? Is it so easy to remember always the sacredness, the hopes, of a nature which at this time Christ took upon Him, when He was born of a pure Virgin ? Is it so easy to respect, to reverence, to control ourselves ? Is it so easy and so common to bear with, to help, to love, to forgive our fellow-men ? Ah ! if for the coming year we would but translate these truths into action, and live our life in the light of them, then no cynic's sneer, no base man's selfishness should ever dim for us the spiritual radiancy of Christmas joy. To us, as we go about our humble daily duties, to us, as to the shepherds in the chilly darkness, there would come from the open heaven flashes of angel light, bursts of angel minstrelsy ; upon the



listening air there would rest the burden of that angel carol, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill towards men," till earth itself, and these dim, guilty cities, and our poor, perplexed, distracted, dying, mortal life should be glorified with a light of God ; while

To prouder folly we should show  
Earth by divine light made divine.

Oh, may it be God's blessing to each of us to enjoy a Christmas, to enjoy a New Year, happy with this happiness of heaven, happy with the primal truth of an ennobled nature ; rich in the humble charities that heal and bless ; transfigured in the light which streams from the manger-cradle, the light of redemption, the light of duty, the light of life ! God grant to you and me and all of us thus to enter here into the joy of our Lord, until at last we be made partakers of His everlasting felicity in the tearless life beyond the grave.

THE END.





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